

Nation-building in Ukraine

Kiev's Ukrainianizing Effect on the Power Elites from the East and South

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Abstract

The traditional east/west divide of Ukraine in terms of language, ethnicity, culture, religion and, not the least, historical memory, continues to nourish conflict and serve as a threat to the country's integrity. The balancing of Ukrainianizing policies on the one hand, and the safeguarding of the rights, privileges and interests of the country's large Russian minority on the other, has proven a major challenge to the shifting political leaderships in Kiev. Whereas a too nationalist approach to state driven nation-building easily could anger Ukraine's Russophones and nourish cultural tension, Professor Pål Kolstø at the University of Oslo has argued that failure to establish a distinct Ukrainian nation could delegitimize the state project and facilitate reintegration with Russia.

This thesis sets out to investigate this balancing act in Ukraine, and also shed light on how politicians originating from the traditionally Russia/Eurasia-oriented eastern and southern regions of the country approach the delicate nationality issue. In particular, it sets out to test a hypothesis promoted by Kolstø, according to which Kiev exerts a Ukrainianizing influence on these politicians. By applying nation-building theory it also seeks to shed light on the dynamics of the triangular relationship between Ukraine as a nationalizing state, the large Russian minority in Ukraine and the Russian Federation as the national homeland to this minority.

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Preface.....	1
1.2	Research questions	4
1.3	Identifying units of analysis	7
1.4	Thesis outline.....	8
1.5	Limitations	9
1.6	Definitions and clarifications	10
1.6.1	The nation	11
1.6.2	State vs. official language.....	11
1.6.3	Pro-Russianism	12
2	Theoretical and methodological framework	13
2.1	Applying nation-building theory to Soviet Union successor states.....	13
2.2	Early nation-building theory discussion.....	14
2.3	A triadic relational nexus.....	16
2.3.1	National minority	17
2.3.2	Nationalizing state	18
2.3.3	External national homeland	20
2.4	Criticism of the triadic nexus model	20
2.5	Methological considerations / Selection of data.....	22
2.5.1	Interviews.....	23
3	Leonid Kuchma	25
3.1	Background.....	25
3.2	The language issue.....	28
3.3	Foreign policy	36
3.4	The 1999 Presidential Elections.....	45
3.5	Summary.....	49
4	Viktor Yanukovych	50
4.1	Background.....	51
4.2	The language issue.....	53
4.2.1	The Law On Principles of the State Language Policy	61
4.3	Foreign policy	63
4.4	Summary	71
5	Expectations to and perceptions of nationality policies.....	73
5.1	Expectations to Kuchma and Yanukovych.....	73
5.2	Reactions from the Russian minority in Ukraine.....	77
5.3	Reactions from the Russian Federation.....	83
5.4	Summary	85
6	Conclusions.....	87
6.1	Final thoughts on Kolstø's hypothesis	90
7	Literature.....	92
8	Interviews	100

1 Introduction

Ukraine is currently undergoing its biggest political crisis since the collapse of the Soviet Union over twenty years ago. The traditional east/west divide of the country, it seems, was never fully overcome, and continues as a basis for separatist attempts as the country is now faced with the threat of civil war. The shifting political leaderships' efforts to balance ukrainianizing policies with the safeguarding of the rights and privileges of the large Russian minority over the past two decades, have seemingly failed. This thesis sets out to investigate this difficult balancing act. In particular, it seeks to determine how Russophone and allegedly pro-Russian politicians approach this delicate issue in a country as divided as Ukraine in terms of language, ethnicity and historical memory. By applying nation-building theory, I seek to test a hypothesis formulated by Professor Pål Kolstø in 2000, according to which Russophone politicians are subject to some sort of Ukrainization as they engage in politics on a national level. By thoroughly analyzing the presidencies of two of the most influential Russophone politicians in post-Soviet Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych respectively, I seek to shed light on the above mentioned hypothesis.

1.1 Preface

The disintegration of the multinational Soviet Union resulted in the emergence of fifteen ethnically and culturally heterogeneous independent successor states on the international arena. Whereas the three Baltic states restored the independence that had been abruptly taken from them during World War II, the twelve remaining Soviet republics are deemed to have seceded from the Soviet Union and are thus referred to as Newly Independent States (NIS). When the dust from the historic collapse finally settled across the dissolved communist empire, it immediately became clear that a wide spectrum of difficult challenges was on the horizon. Ranging from trivial disputes over street names to secessionist conflicts and bloody civil wars, the post-Soviet space soon proved to be a constant source of unrest and political turmoil as the state consolidation processes went along. The underlying reasons for this continuing turbulence were many, and the bumpy ride from socialism and superpower status to market economy and an uncertain future brought several of the newborn states to the brink of, or one might in some cases even argue all the

way to, disaster. Not least did much of this political instability come across as a result of ethnic and political-cultural conflicts.

One of these Newly Independent States was Ukraine, the second largest of all of the fifteen Soviet successor states both in terms of population size and area¹. The challenges facing Ukraine at the time of the demise were tremendous. Not only was the need to establish functioning political institutions and to adapt to a market-driven economy evident; it also soon proved to be no exception as far as political-cultural tension was concerned. Facing a population largely divided between the east and the west in terms of language, ethnicity, culture, religion and, not the least, historical memory, the nationality question in Ukraine required immediate attention in the wake of the newly acquired independence. The Ukrainian central authority's approach to the latter issue in the more than two decades that have passed since the Soviet Union disintegration, will be the main focus point for this thesis.

It is only logical that any newborn state is faced with the enormous challenges of establishing functional political institutions, securing its borders, ensuring law-enforcement, etc. This physical framework of the *state*, however, is accompanied by a political *nation*, which fills it with content on a more abstract level. Where such a nation does not exist, or is too weak to function as a unifying force, which was largely the case in most of the post-Soviet states, processes commonly referred to as *nation-building* are often initiated in an attempt to create such a nation. I have here deliberately put emphasis on the words "state" and "nation". Although these terms at first glance might seem quite similar and overlapping in their meanings, this thesis will operate with a clear distinction between the two. I shall return more thoroughly to the two terms and clarify why I make such a clear distinction between them. I do, however, find it appropriate to underline the distinction already at this initial stage as this thesis will revolve around *nation-building*, as opposed to *state-building*, processes.

The outburst of several armed conflicts throughout the post-Soviet space, including the war of Transnistria in neighboring Moldova, underlined the importance of a unifying national identity in the ethnically and culturally heterogeneous Ukraine. Although modern-day Ukraine has managed to stay clear of civil war and until recently also other use of military force, in sharp contrast to several of its fellow former Soviet Republics, a student of

¹ Population size (July 2013 estimate): 44,573,205. Area: 603,550 square kilometers (Central Intelligence Agency 2013).

² *Titular* refers to the name-giving quality of a national group. Thus, a titular nationality is a nationality after

Ukraine today is certain to discover high levels of continuing cultural and political tension. First and foremost, this tension is linked to the conflicting interests of the large ethnic Russian minority, primarily situated in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian titular population², primarily situated in the western and central regions, on the other. To complicate this image even further, a relatively large number of Russophone Ukrainians are *caught in the middle*, having Russian as their preferred language, but being Ukrainian by ethnicity.

Issues such as the status of the Russian language in Ukraine, the interpretation of controversial historic events and, not least, political relations with "big brother" Russia continue to nourish tension between the eastern and western regions of the country. The latter issue has been complicated even further by a Russian neighborhood policy largely based on *homeland nationalism*, a phenomenon to which I shall return later in this thesis. Furthermore, the level of conflict has recently reached new heights as far right-wing nationalist sentiments in Ukraine have gained ground. The unprecedented support for, and subsequent breakthrough to the *Verkhovna Rada* in the 2012 Parliamentary elections by the nationalist All-Ukrainian Union "*Svoboda*", bears witness to this. This increased activity on the far right-wing of Ukrainian politics also became visible during the political crisis that unfolded during the winter of 2013/14, in which paramilitary groups such as Right Sector turned out to play an important role.

The absence of civil war and until recently also armed conflict should in Ukraine's case, however, clearly cannot be confused with continuing political stability in the Western sense of the expression, as we can see today. Academics, researchers and other students of post-Soviet Ukraine can today look back on over two decades of various levels of continuing political turmoil, the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 being the high peaks. Different kinds of scandals, often involving high-level politicians, frequently occur. High levels of corruption throughout the entire state apparatus and the mentioned tension amongst an ethnically and culturally divided population contribute to unpredictability. To this day this turbulence continues to overshadow whatever progress is being made in the gradual transition to a consolidated democracy, the sworn path enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine from 1996 (Zakonodatel'stva Ukrainy 1996).

² *Titular* refers to the name-giving quality of a national group. Thus, a titular nationality is a nationality after which the corresponding Union Republic was named. For instance, the Ukrainian SSR was named after the Ukrainians, the Estonian SSR after the Estonians, and so on.

1.2 Research questions

It seems obvious that the nationality question and the central authority's approach to it have been of great importance to the consolidation process of post-Soviet Ukraine given its ethnically and culturally heterogeneous population. The political leadership has changed a number of times over the years, and the various leaders have taken different approaches to the question of national identity. Furthermore, out of independent Ukraine's four elected presidents³, two originate from the traditionally Europe-oriented Western Ukraine, the other two from the Russian-speaking and traditionally Eurasia-oriented eastern parts of the country. Whereas Leonid Kravchuk (in office 1991-94) and Viktor Yushchenko (2005-10) are widely perceived as Western-oriented liberals, Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) and Viktor Yanukovych (2010-2014) are usually associated with more pro-Russian policies. It is therefore reasonable to assume that we are dealing not with one single approach to the nationality question, but rather diverging approaches driven by conflicting interests.

This thesis, however, will maintain that a large portion of continuity nevertheless has been evident in the central authority's approach to the nationality question throughout the post-Soviet era. I will argue that some key elements in the nation-building processes initiated under Ukraine's first president Leonid Kravchuk, to a large degree have been continued by his successors regardless of their geographical origins and political orientations. The following question then emerges: How is such continuity possible given the fact that post-Soviet Ukraine's shifting political leaderships have pursued essentially different political agendas? The essence of this question also preoccupied Professor Pål Kolstø as he in *Political Construction Sites* (2000) provided his thoughts on nation-building in Ukraine and other Soviet Union successor states. He argues:

"Whereas Minsk has functioned as a school for Russification, it is obvious that Kiev exerts a different influence on those who move there and join the political elite in the Ukrainian capital: They become more or less Ukrainianized" (Kolstø 2000: p.188).

Should the ukrainianizing influence exerted on the elite indeed be "obvious", as claimed by Kolstø, finding empirical evidence to support it should accordingly not be too

³ Following the political crisis that unfolded during the winter of 2013/14, which subsequently led to the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych, Oleksandr Turchynov was elected acting President of Ukraine by Parliament, pending early elections in May 2014. It is therefore a matter of definition whether Ukraine has had four or five presidents. In this thesis, however, I will mainly refer to the four presidents who were elected to the position through direct elections.

difficult. The fact that Ukraine's second President, the allegedly pro-Russian Leonid Kuchma, during the presidential campaign virtually converted from being a Russian-speaker, and started speaking Ukrainian in most public appearances, is by Kolstø presented as evidence for his hypothesis of Ukrainization. Much emphasis is also put on how Kuchma did not include official bilingualism in the Constitution of 1996, as was expected of him from the ethnic Russians and the other Russian-speakers in the country (ibid.). This brings nation-building policies to the center of attention, and it is within this sphere I will focus my search for empirical evidence.

A more apparent problem with the hypothesis, however, is the vague and undefined concept of "Ukrainization". The degree to which the political elite is subjected to the latter is also vaguely described as "more or less". This raises a few questions: If those joining the political elite in Kiev are indeed Ukrainianized, what exactly does that *mean* in practical terms and to what degree are they subject to such Ukrainization? Another important aspect is what makes up the driving forces behind this process. Does Ukrainization mean that pro-Russian politicians undergo a fundamental change of mentality, a sort of romantic renaissance on a personal level, through which they adapt to a different set of values than they had to begin with? Or is the Ukrainization process rather nurtured by pragmatism?

Kolstø makes a few points in this regard. Firstly, he claims that members of the Ukrainian political elite have already made up their minds: Ukraine is to remain independent of Russia, and that this is not possible "unless the country has a cultural identity distinct from that of Russia" (ibid.: p.189). In this regard he briefly points to Moscow as a Ukrainianizing force in the sense that Ukrainian nationalists will feel the need to "keep their distance" to strong Russian forces that continue to see Ukraine as ancient Russian ancestral territory. Secondly, Kolstø maintains that the pressure from local voters to follow up cultural pledges made during the election campaign is not strong enough for politicians to follow up on controversial pro-Russian policies. Finally, he draws a distinction between what he refers to as "ethnic romantics" and "power elites". Whereas these two groups have been on a collision course in Minsk, they have in Kiev discovered that they have common interests:

"They have not concluded any formal alliances, but in practice they have ended up pulling in the same direction, despite their different starting points. Their shared goal has been to keep Ukraine outside the embrace of Russia and to give the populace a separate identity. To gain credibility the Ukrainian state project had to be imbued with a cultural content distinct from that of Russia" (ibid.: p.193).

Kolstø argues that any nation-building project has two important elements: Cultural and educational policy on the one hand and foreign policy on the other (ibid.: p.182). Whereas the language issue easily can be assigned to the former category, the latter issue of foreign relations introduces another potentially useful parameter in the search for empirical evidence for (or against) the Kolstø hypothesis. As I have already touched upon, the way Ukraine forms its foreign relations with Russia is of vital importance for the nationality question. Not only is this due to its shared history and close cultural bonds, but also because of the large Russian minority, which often sees itself as "belonging" to Russia, not only in terms of ethnicity, but also, as we shall see, by nationhood. It is only logical to assume that the alleged Ukrainization of the elite, if indeed evident, will affect also the regime's nation-building efforts. This thesis sets out to test this hypothesis of an alleged Ukrainization of the political elite in Kiev, and also the underlying driving forces for it promoted by Kolstø. Based on the above, I have developed the following research questions for this thesis:

1. Are Russophone politicians, who come to Kiev from the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, subject to a Ukrainianizing influence as they engage in politics on a national level, and how exactly can such Ukrainization be detected and measured?
2. Should such Ukrainization indeed be evident, what are the underlying driving forces for and subsequent effects of this, and how is it reflected within the realms of language policy and foreign relations?
3. Should such Ukrainization not be evident, then how can differences and similarities among the various presidents on the nationality issue and foreign policy towards Russia best be explained?

As indicated above I will in this thesis follow up on Kolstø's distinction on nationalizing policies between cultural (internal) policy on the one hand, and foreign policy on the other. In my view, it would be a mistake not to distinguish between the two as the Ukrainization efforts may vary significantly in both form and intensity within the two spheres. The real question would therefore be if and how the two are linked together, and to what extent they affect each other. Is it reasonable to assume that they go hand in hand, and that Ukrainization efforts within one of the elements are mirrored within the other? Or is it, on the contrary, possible to run two parallel paths, more or less independent of each other? Can the President of Ukraine in any way compensate for a weak Ukrainization policy in one of the spheres by promoting it more ambitiously in the other?

1.3 Identifying units of analysis

Identifying manageable units of analysis are vital, and "post-Soviet Ukraine" is arguably much too wide a concept to function as such when embarking on a research project of this size. I therefore find it appropriate to narrow down the chain of events into more manageable fragments. There are a number of ways to do this. This could for instance be to brake the timeframe down into decades (1990s and 2000s) or based on important events (pre-and post-Orange Revolution). One approach, which has proven particularly fruitful in the case of Ukraine, however, is breaking the timeframe down into presidential terms or simply into presidents. Such an approach in the Ukrainian case makes sense also because of the traditionally strong position of the presidency at the expense of other political institutions. Renowned scholars such as Bjørklund & Rodin (2009) and Kulyk (2013) have also taken this approach, and I find it particularly useful for this thesis. As I have already pointed out, Ukraine to this day has had four elected presidents. When I in this thesis choose largely to focus on Ukraine's second and fourth presidents, Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych, this is for three main reasons:

1. As my main objective is to examine an alleged Ukrainization on those joining the political elite in Kiev on a national level, it would make sense to investigate the presidencies of the two presidents originating from the allegedly pro-Russian and Eurasia-oriented regions of Ukraine, as my units of analysis. It is only logical that such Ukrainization would be easier to detect within a pro-Russian regime than within a regime that is considered pro-Ukrainian to begin with.
2. When testing a general hypothesis of this kind against empirical data, it is, in my view, important not to restrict the research to one single case, as there may be numeral case-specific reasons why the hypothesis does (or does not) have applicability on that particular case. By widening the empirical basis, it should increase the chances for confirming or rejecting the hypothesis in question.
3. Another important point is that as I conduct my research almost 15 years after Kolstø formulated his hypothesis of Ukrainization, the amount of empirical data available to me is significantly larger than what was the case with Kolstø in the year 2000. By testing the hypothesis' applicability on the recent case of Yanukovych, which was not available to Kolstø at the time when he formulated his hypothesis, we will also get a clearer idea of whether it has validity today.

1.4 Thesis outline

This paper is divided into a total of six chapters. Following up on this introductory part, in which I present my research questions and provide a general overview over the thesis, I move on to account for the theoretical and methodological framework in chapter 2. I start that chapter out with a general overview over nation-building theories and how they apply to the post-Soviet space. Subsequently I thoroughly account for the theories on which I have based this thesis, primarily Rogers Brubaker's triadic relational nexus model. I also briefly touch upon possible shortcomings of the model and some of the criticism directed against it. Finally I account for the methods applied in identifying, collecting and analyzing the data collected for this thesis.

My empirical research is presented in the three subsequent chapters. In chapters 3 and 4 I make a thorough presentation of my two units of analysis, the presidencies of Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych respectively. After a few introductory and general remarks, I move on to analyzing, in these two chapters, Kuchma and Yanukovych's respective approaches to the nationality issue, with special emphasis on the language issue and foreign policy. In these chapters I draw mainly on qualitative textual data, but also, where I found it relevant, on comments from people I have interviewed in Kiev. I have throughout these two chapters made an effort to incorporate a few direct quotations from the two presidents in question, and in turn analyzed how these statements correspond with their practical politics. I wish to underline that most of these quotations and other references to Russian language material largely are rendered in the original language. Although Kuchma and Yanukovych are handled individually in separate chapters, I draw parallels between them where found appropriate.

In chapter 5 I move on to account for some of the reactions to/perceptions of Kuchma and Yanukovych's nationality policies, in particular among Ukraine's Russian minority and the Russian Federation as the national homeland to this minority within the scope of Brubaker's triadic nexus model. In that chapter I set out to identify discrepancies between the initial expectations to the two Presidents when they took office and the subsequent reactions to their actual policies. In my analysis of the latter I seek to identify evidence for or against Kolstø's hypothesis. In this analysis I continue to draw on a wide range of textual qualitative data, but the nature of the chapter also opened up for the use of certain quantitative data, to which I have conducted my own personal analysis.

In chapter 6 I summarize and draw my final conclusions. In that chapter I revisit my initial research questions and seek to provide answers to these based on my empirical findings as presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5. In conclusion I revisit Kolstø's hypothesis and provide my final thoughts on whether or not I consider it, as presented in this chapter, valid in its original form. I also give recommendations for future research based on my own findings.

1.5 Limitations

One of the limitations of this thesis is the fact that the Yanukovych presidency up until recently has been an ongoing event. This has presented me with a number of challenges as day-to-day events have had an impact on the various perceptions of Yanukovych as either a Europe-oriented reformer or a neo-Soviet bayonet for Russian interests. This proved particularly problematic in the months following Yanukovych's controversial scrapping of a fully negotiated free trade and association agreement with the European Union in November 2013. The several months long political crisis that followed this unexpected turn of events has in many ways been directly relevant for the scope of this thesis, but incorporating it would have proven challenging, if not impossible, given both the dynamics of the crisis and the size of this paper. I therefore found it necessary to restrict the empirical data on which I base my analysis in time. For this reason, the textual material I draw upon was exclusively published prior to August 2013.

Although I have largely refrained from drawing upon events that unfolded during the course of writing this thesis, this is not to say that they can be completely ignored. Firstly, it would have made little sense to lead up to a conclusion that more recent events have proven to be false. Secondly, as my interviews were all conducted in the aftermath of the dramatic events that unfolded during the winter of 2013/14, the interviewees were obviously on some level affected by them in their responses. I have therefore, to the best of my ability, tried to compensate for this not only in the way I presented my questions, but also in the process of analyzing the answers. Although I detected a significant increase in Ukrainians' general awareness on questions related to the nationality issue during the course of writing this thesis, it is nevertheless my opinion that this did not interfere with the main objective of this thesis, i.e. testing the Kolstø hypothesis.

1.6 Definitions and clarifications

I have already briefly touched upon the potential conceptual confusion, which may occur in much of the academic discourse when dealing with terms such as *nation*, *state*, *nation-state*, *nationalism* etc. Because of overlapping and inconsistent use of various terms, it can at times be difficult to know where one ends, the other begins and which originates from what. Connor (1994: p.91) has gone so far as to refer to this confusion as a "terminological disease that plagues the study of global politics". To dive into heated academic discussions on terminological confusion goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, some initial clarifications are nevertheless needed to avoid conceptual confusion in the remainder of this thesis.

Let us firstly look into the concept of *nation-building*, as opposed to *state-building*. As I have already mentioned, these processes, the building of a nation if you will, shall be a main area of focus in this thesis. As pointed out by Kolstø, this architectural metaphor implies the existence of consciously acting agents - architects, engineers, carpenters, and the like (Kolstø 2000: p.16). In other words, we are not dealing as much with a gradual self-sustaining evolution of the nation (or state), as we are with an active construction of such by designated actors. The building-part of the concept, although heavily contested by Connor in his famous article "Nation-building or Nation-destroying?", an article to which I shall later return, isn't really the one generating confusion. Of much more relevance is *what* is being built and *how* this is done. I shall return much more thoroughly to the concept of nation-building and the theoretical framework associated with it.

I will clarify what I refer to when using the terms *state* and *nation* in this thesis by defining them. I find this necessary as the interutilization of these two words, according to Connor (1994: p.92), is one of the most common manifestations of terminological license. Whereas a *state* can be classified relatively briefly as a *member of the United Nations*, or with a simple reference to Max Weber's famous definition of the state as "a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber 1946: p.78), the *nation* requires some additional discussion as it appears to a much more abstract phenomenon.

1.6.1 The nation

The concept of the *nation* has been the source of much academic debate. As pointed out by Rogers Brubaker, it is largely taken for granted *that* they exist, although *how* they exist - and how they came to exist - is much disputed (Brubaker 1996: p.13). According to Kolstø, there exist at least two very different views as to what a nation is. The first, the *political* definition, simply states that the nation is the sum of all the citizens or inhabitants of a given state (Kolstø 2000: p.2). Even though this has been the dominant understanding in the West, and is even enshrined in the name of the world organization, the United *Nations*, I find this approach much too wide to be applied to my thesis. If the nation is defined non-culturally, nation-building processes would largely be based on attempts to develop a common *political* identity associated with the state in question. Given the complex composition of the Ukrainian citizenry in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, historical memory etc., I find such an approach way too general as far as Ukraine is concerned.

The second and rival concept, however, sees the nation as a *cultural* entity, held together by common language, traditions, folklore, mores and religion - in short, the ethnic nation (ibid.). The latter approach appears to be more applicable to this thesis. Nevertheless, I find it necessary to clarify more thoroughly what this means, and who is considered to belong to the cultural nation. In my search for a fruitful and applicable definition I have turned to Jan Germen Janmaat, who defines the nation as:

"[...] a group of people with one or more specific cultural traits whose members (1) think of themselves and are thought of by others as being part of it and (2) endorse a political program aimed at enhancing or maintaining a system of individual and/or collective rights and privileges" (Janmaat 2000: p.33).

1.6.2 State vs. official language

Some scholars draw a distinction between "official language" and "state language" when discussing the language issue in Ukraine. At times it seems that the two terms are used with overlapping meanings, which after all is the case in most countries (Kolstø 2000: p.187), while at others they are handled in clear distinction to each other. It seems that much of this confusion in the Ukrainian case originates from the language debate of the early 1990s, when Ukraine found itself in the process of adapting a Constitution. Both "official language" and "state language" were proposed as possible *statuses* aimed at categorizing various languages used in Ukraine. Based on this, I find it appropriate to underline that the

Constitution of Ukraine, which was adopted in 1996, mentions two categories of languages: "The state language of Ukraine" [Державною мовою], which to this day is the Ukrainian language only, and "languages of national minorities of Ukraine", which refers to all other languages of Ukraine, *including* Russian (Zakonodatel'stva Ukrainy 1996). For the remainder of this thesis I will therefore refer to the Ukrainian language as "the state language of Ukraine". It should also be noted that the *Law On the Principles of the State Language Policy*, which was adopted in August 2012, introduced "regional languages" as a third category of languages in Ukraine.

1.6.3 Pro-Russianism

During the course of writing this thesis it became evident that being "pro-Russian", which supposedly was the case with both Kuchma and Yanukovich, is a relatively vague concept, which can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Although I do not find it necessary to *define* what it means to be a "pro-Russian" politician in Ukraine, I would nevertheless like to draw up an initial distinction that can serve as a useful reference point in the following discussion. In my view, the many variations of "pro-Russianism" can be attributed to one out of two following categories:

- a) Promoting positive attitudes towards the Russian Federation as a state, and;
- b) Promoting positive attitudes towards Russians in Ukraine and the interests of the Russian-speaking part of the population.

2 Theoretical and methodological framework

2.1 Applying nation-building theory to Soviet Union successor states

As pointed out by Kolstø, the term nation-building came into vogue among historically oriented political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s (Kolstø 2000: p.44). Although this most certainly brought about a resurgence of academic research on the subject, this is not to say that nation-building itself was a new phenomenon. The classical approach to the latter, however, was more of an endeavor to understand the evolution of Western states (ibid.: p.54). How the civic nations of Western Europe consolidated is a much researched topic, and scholars such as Stein Rokkan have developed theories to explain how these nations took form over the course of centuries. As the number of (UN member) states around the globe during the period 1945-2011 rose dramatically from 51 to 193, much as a result of comprehensive decolonization and also the disintegration of the Soviet Union and fragmentation of other state entities such as Yugoslavia, the issue of nation-building became more acute. Could existing nation-building and integration theory be applied to Non-Western societies? Even Rokkan himself realized the problem of telescoping into decades developments that in Western Europe had lasted for centuries:

"[...]the European sequence simply cannot be repeated in the newest nations; the new nation-builders have to start out from fundamentally different conditions, they face an entirely different world"
(Rokkan 1975: p.600).

The above outlined problem must be seen as a major reason for the mentioned revival for nation-building research within academic circles over the past few decades. A considerable number of scholars, such as Rogers Brubaker, David Laitin, Pål Kolstø, Walker Connor and others, have dedicated themselves to developing new theories to better understand the processes that occur when nations form, or rather are *being* formed, within a compressed timeframe. Researchers today are therefore able to choose from a rather copious toolkit of various theories when studying nation-building processes around the world. It is clear, however, that some theories are better suited for certain purposes than others. Applying a theoretical framework to a research project should in any case be done with close attention to the research question or questions at hand, this thesis being no exception. In the extension of this, I wish to underline that my selection of theories to be scrutinized more thoroughly in the following is based on certain criteria:

First and foremost, it seems reasonable to choose from theorists who draw upon empirical data from our own part of the world and recent times, rather than distant climes and centuries. This, in my view, should decrease the possibility for misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It is for this very reason renowned nation-building theorists such as Rokkan and Reinhart Bendix largely will be left out of this thesis, as their theories build on empirical data that go back centuries. It seems more reasonable to look to the likes of Rogers Brubaker, David Laitin and others, who build much of their research on recent events in Eastern-Europe. This would, in theory, increase the applicability of their theories and models to a post-Soviet state such as Ukraine. At the same time, it is clear that if a theory derived from certain empirical data claims to be general, then that theory can hardly be *confirmed* simply by establishing that it is particularly applicable on the reality from which it was derived in the first place. This underlines the importance of maintaining a critical distance when applying theory to a research project.

I will concentrate on theories evolving around nationality policy and state-driven nation-building, rather than on nationalism as a popular movement. Although this form of nationalism recently has gained ground in Ukraine, and accordingly is unlikely to be ignored by the nation-builders, this nevertheless falls on the outside of my outlined research questions. It seems more appropriate to look into theorists, who focus on (ethno)nationalism as a *political* phenomenon within multiethnic states.

2.2 Early nation-building theory discussion

The concept of "nation-building", as it was used by the first generation of nation-building theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, has been subject to much criticism. In this thesis I will largely focus on Rogers Brubaker's model of a triadic relational nexus put forward in *Nationalism Reframed* in 1996. In order to better understand Brubaker's model and the discussion from which it was derived, however, it is necessary to take a quick look at the debate leading up to Brubaker's response.

It seems reasonable to choose Karl Wolfgang Deutsch as a starting point for this quick review of previous nation-building theory as much of the subsequent discussion on the matter lead back to his findings. Deutsch sought through much of his research to demonstrate not only how political integration was a likely outcome when peoples who already shared the same language, traditions and basic social institutions interacted with each

other, but also how political disintegration would be the likely outcome in the opposite case, when such common traits were absent. This school of thought, however, came under fierce attack in 1972 when Walker Connor published his famous article *Nation-building or Nation-destroying?*. In Connor's view, the Deutschian approach in nation-building theory virtually or totally ignores ethnic diversity in its overemphasis on social cleavages of various kinds. Connor argues:

"Scholars associated with theories of 'nation-building' have tended either to ignore the question of ethnic diversity or to treat the matter of ethnic identity superficially as merely one of a number of minor impediments to effective state-integration" (Connor 1972: p.319).

Such an approach is according to Connor problematic as only a good 9% of the contemporary states in 1972 could be described as essentially homogeneous from an ethnic viewpoint. The core essence in Connor's reasoning is that the up until then widely accepted doctrine that modernization dissolves ethnic loyalties can be challenged on purely empirical grounds. Furthermore, he upholds that if nation-building is indeed merely assimilation of self-differentiating ethnic groups (which Connor equates with nations) into a larger society, then the so-called "building" of a nation is in fact not "*nation-building*", but on the contrary "*nation-destroying*" (ibid.: p.336). It is also Connor's understanding that active engineering and construction of a nation is in fact counterproductive, and is more likely to spark xenophobic hostility and ethnonationalism as the ethnic consciousness rises.

These thoughts promoted by Connor in 1972 are rendered to this day. A critic, however, may point to the problem of how he essentialises different ethnic groups by counting them and neatly placing them next to each other on paper in a world that is not black and white. His contribution to the debate, nevertheless, sparked lively discussions on the matter and formed the basis for further development of nation-building theory. One of those who offered much support to Connor's emphasis on politicized ethnicity was Joseph Rothschild. In his book *Ethnopolitics* he tried to explain why and how ethnic, rather than class-based understandings, give politicized shape to unequal distributions of goods in multicultural countries. He argues:

"Indeed, the ethnic dimension of politics and the political dimension of ethnicity have become a major and nagging concern for the central elites of multiethnic states, who appreciate that sheer and mere pragmatic effectiveness in the mobilization and allocation of material resources does not suffice to earn legitimacy for their states and regimes unless they also come to ideological and institutional terms with politicized ethnicity" (Rothschild 1981: p.248).

Other scholars, however, such as John Breuilly, followed up on Karl Deutsch's school of thought, and downplayed the role of ethnicity in nationalism and nation-building theory. According to Breuilly, the idea that nationalism ultimately arises from some sort of national identity, or that it is the search for such an identity, is very misleading (Breuilly 1993: p.1).

"A vague definition of nationalism which includes any statements about nations or ethnic groups would create an impossibly large subject. That can be avoided by including only statements which make the idea of a peculiar nation explicit; make this assertion the foundation of all political claims; and which are the central ideological statements deployed by a political movement or organization" (ibid: p.3).

The above outlined discussion subsequently led the way for a new contribution to the debate that to this day is widely recognized by the social integration research community. It is also my understanding that Rogers Brubaker's triadic relational nexus model is particularly applicable to post-Soviet Ukraine, especially when researching the cultural gap between the Russian minority and the Ukrainian titular population.

2.3 A triadic relational nexus

It should be noted that the nation-building processes in the post-Soviet states in no ways started entirely from scratch when the Soviet Union collapsed. According to Brubaker, nationhood and nationalism flourish in the post-Soviet space today largely because of the regime's nationality policies during the Soviet era. Although *antinationalist*, these policies were anything but *anti-national*, he claims (Brubaker 1996: p.17). In this respect it is no coincidence that each of the Soviet Republics was named after the titular population of that territorial area. Brubaker continues:

"The regime repressed nationalism, of course; but at the same time [...] it went further than any other state before or since in institutionalizing territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality as fundamental social categories. In doing so it inadvertently created a political field supremely conducive to nationalism" (ibid.).

The stage was in other words set for national awakenings as the Soviet Union collapsed and the sovereignty fell into the hands of the titular elites in the various republics⁴.

⁴ It is important to underline that ordinary citizens had restricted, if any, political powers in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise as these were reserved for the titular elites of the respective republics. These elites were not only bound by the expectations inherent in the fact that the newly born states bore the names of the titular nations, they were also greatly overrepresented in governing bodies.

What was to complicate this image terribly, however, was the heterogeneous ethnic composition left behind in each of the now independent states by the greatest social experiment of all times. In particular this concerned the large number of Russian internal diasporas, that is, Russians who lived outside the RSFSR, but inside the USSR, who now suddenly found themselves a minority in newly independent states.

Whereas it became clear that the Russian Federation, officially succeeding the Soviet Union as an actor on the international arena, sought to protect the interests of the Russian diaspora groups in the near abroad, a complex triangular relationship formed. This is what Rogers Brubaker in *Nationalism Reframed* refers to as a triadic relational nexus linking national minorities, nationalizing states and external national homelands (ibid.: pp.55-76). I shall in this thesis focus on the dynamically interactive quality of this nexus and examine more closely how the Ukrainian state has approached the issue of nation-building when faced with a large Russian diaspora minority, and also the Russian Federation as an external national homeland to this minority. Let us look more closely into the three interacting actors of the nexus as Brubaker defines them, starting with the Russian diaspora population as a national minority.

2.3.1 National minority

Brubaker refers to national minority not as a "group" that is given by the facts of ethnic demography, but as a political stance, or more precisely, he says, "[...] a family of related yet mutually competing stances, not a static ethnodemographic condition" (ibid.: p.60). He elaborates on this by identifying three elements that are characteristic of this political stance, or family of stances:

- 1) The public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically or politically dominant ethnocultural nation;
- 2) the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethnocultural nationality; and
- 3) the assertion, on the basis of this ethnocultural nationality, of certain collective cultural or political rights (ibid.).

The fact that the Russian diaspora group in 1989 constituted 22.1% of the total population of Ukraine, whereas the corresponding number for the Ukrainian titular population was 72.7% (Kolstø 2000: pp.6,84), tells us that the group indeed constituted an *ethnic* minority in Ukraine at the time of the Soviet demise. However, according to the above

listed elements drawn out by Brubaker, the Russian diaspora group in post-Soviet Ukraine cannot automatically be classified as a *national* minority solely on the basis of their ethnicity. It is much more the *content* of their claims, or stances in Brubaker's terminology, that determines whether or not this minority is indeed a *national* one. Furthermore, as the stances are competing and may vary much in shape and intensity within a given minority, it would make sense "not to think of it as a fixed entity or a unitary group, but rather in terms of the field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances" (Brubaker 1996: p.61). Brubaker problematizes the term even further. He emphasizes that there are different ways of conceiving what it means to be a "Russian" in Ukraine, only some of which are consistent with conceiving Russians in Ukraine as a national minority (ibid.: p.62). He states:

"[...]Russians in Ukraine can be understood as persons of Russian ethnic origin, most of whom speak Russian as their native language, who nonetheless belong to the Ukrainian nation, understood as a political, territorial, or civic nation, as the nation of and for all its citizens, regardless of language and ethnicity, not as the nation of and for the ethnic Ukrainians. Were this the prevailing self-understanding of Russians in Ukraine, there would be no Russian 'national minority'" (ibid.).

By this Brubaker illustrates that an ethnic Russian may fall on the outside of the Russian *national* minority simply by rejecting to be a part of it. This makes it harder to identify a clear boundary between ethnic and national minorities, but this is also one of Brubaker's major points. He claims that the apparent clarity and simplicity of the concept dissolve once taking a closer look at it.

2.3.2 Nationalizing state

The second actor in the triadic nexus is the *nationalizing state*, which also functions as the host state to the recently discussed national minority. What characterizes such a state, according to Brubaker, is that it too is a dynamic political stance, or a family of such, rather than a static condition. This is also why he prefers the term nationalizing state rather than a "nation-state", as the latter term implies an achieved or completed condition. He sums up the characteristics of the political stance(s) of the nationalizing state as:

"[...] the tendency to see the state as an 'unrealized' nation-state, as a state destined to be a nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation, but not yet in fact a nation-state (at least not to a sufficient degree); and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting the language, culture, demographic

position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation" (ibid.: p.63).

As we have seen is the case with the national minorities, the concept of the nationalizing state can also be perplexing unless properly defined or characterized. Brubaker stresses that the stances of the nationalizing state may be an avowed and expressly articulated "position" of a given state, but that it in fact does not need to be avowed or articulated in order to be "real" (ibid.). It is rather whether or not representatives of the national minority or the external national homeland *perceive* the stances as nationalizing that really decides whether the host state is indeed a nationalizing one. In other words, post-Soviet Ukraine will according to the model of the triadic relational nexus be a nationalizing state if it is *perceived* as such by the national minorities, namely the Russian one, or the external national homeland to these minorities, namely the Russian Federation. This is not to say, however, that the self-understanding of the host state is irrelevant. Brubaker stresses that the perception of the state as a nationalizing state is much more likely to prevail in the external fields when nationalization is an explicit project for the host state rather than merely a perceived practice (ibid.: p.64). He continues:

"Nor is it unusual for participants in the host state to articulate projects of nationalization, to conceive and justify policies and practices in a nationalizing idiom. Such an idiom is not only eminently respectable but virtually obligatory in some contexts. This is often the case in new states, especially those that, for historical and institutional as well as ethnodemographic reasons, are closely identified with one particular ethnocultural nation" (ibid.).

As this thesis will argue, post-Soviet Ukraine has clear elements of both external *perceptions* of nationalization, and also openly avowed nationalizing projects. It should therefore be safe to classify Ukraine as a nationalizing state according to the above listed characteristics of such a state. To demystify the concept of the nationalizing state, Brubaker himself points to Ukraine as an example of such a state, which puts a special emphasis on the language question. The approach to this issue, according to him, is in no way constant, but rather a:

"[...] dynamically changing field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual figures within and around the state, competing to inflect state policy in a particular direction [...]" (ibid.).

2.3.3 External national homeland

The third actor in the triadic nexus is the external national homeland. This too is described by Brubaker as a dynamic political stance, or a family of such, and it is accordingly constructed through political action, not given by the facts of ethnic demography. Characteristic for the "homeland" stances is the idea of a shared nationhood, which reaches beyond borders of state and citizenship. This shared nationhood, in turn, makes the state in some sense responsible not only for its own citizens, but also for ethnic co-nationals who reside in other states and possess other citizenships (ibid.: p67). Such homeland stances vary much in form and intensity. Whereas some states confine themselves to offer moral support to ethnic co-nationals abroad, others take a much more active approach, offering material support as well. Brubaker offers a wide spectrum of contested questions in homeland states, such as how forcefully it should press its concerns in the various international forums that monitor and set standards for policies towards minorities, or what sorts of ties and relations with the homeland or mother country should be fostered (ibid.).

In the post-Soviet space, the stances of an external national homeland described above have arguably been visible in the neighborhood policy of the Russian Federation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, its official successor state witnessed not only the loss of vast geographical territories to the newly independent states, but also dramatic reduction in its population. The fact that most of the 25 million ethnic Russians, or approximately 17% of all Russians in the Soviet Union, with the demise became citizens of other states, was particularly hard to accept. These post-imperial phantom limb pains, in turn, have triggered what many of the Soviet successor states perceive as an aggressive neighborhood policy with Pan-Slavic features on Russia's part. Based on Brubaker's theory and the above mentioned it should therefore not be unreasonable to classify the Russian Federation as an external national homeland for the Russian diaspora groups abroad.

2.4 Criticism of the triadic nexus model

The theory of the triadic relational nexus has gained wide recognition and is considered particularly applicable to the post-Soviet space by many scholars, such as Arel (1995) and Laitin (1998: p.102). It has, however, also been criticized. Taras Kuzio has gone so far as to claim that: "The Brubaker framework serves to continue to confuse scholars of

nationalism and nation-building" (Kuzio 2001: p.144). In his article *'Nationalising states' or nation-building?*, Kuzio presents fierce criticism of almost every aspect of the triadic nexus theory. His main argument is that the nationalising policies found in the post-Communist Eastern European states to a very little degree differs from the "civic" nation-building that has been present in Western European states for centuries. According to him, all civic states continue to pursue, to varying degrees, homogenising (nationalizing) policies. All states are therefore "nationalizing" by definition, he claims, and the distinction drawn up by Brubaker accordingly serves no purpose but to denigrate the post-Soviet successor states. He also questions why the Russian Federation "[...] escapes being labelled as a 'nationalizing state' by those scholars who are apt at the same time to label the non-Russian successor states as 'nationalizing'" (ibid.).

Other scholars have later joined Kuzio in his criticism. Walter Kemp, although going much easier on Brubaker in his rhetoric and acknowledging the triadic nexus model as a "quite convenient" analytical tool, claims that a fourth dimension nevertheless must be taken into consideration:

"[...]national minority issues are no longer confined to domestic politics and bilateral relations", he claims, and continues: "The triadic nexus must also consider a fourth dimension, namely the international community and international law" (Kemp 2006: p.119).

The core essence of this argument is that international law obliges nationalizing states to create an environment that protects and promotes the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Furthermore, international law provides limitations to how far an external national homeland can go in acting outside of its jurisdiction, which extends to its territory and citizenry (ibid.). These restrictions in the states' respective room for maneuver, imposed by the international community, imply that the triadic nexus should be considered within the parameters of what is prescribed by international law, Kemp emphasizes. He does not, however, go so far as to speak of a quadratic nexus as he does not consider the international community a player, but rather a provider of "a framework, standards and potential mediation in cases when the actors have exhausted domestic and bilateral means of resolving their differences" (ibid.: p.123).

2.5 Methodological considerations / Selection of data

The identification, collection and subsequent analysis of relevant data is, needless to say, of vital importance to any research project. The researcher should always carefully consider which methods should be applied in order to come up with the best possible answers to the research question or questions at hand. I shall in the following briefly explain which research methods I have applied in the process of collecting relevant data for this thesis, and also account for the considerations that lie behind these choices.

As outlined, it has been my intention to investigate an alleged Ukrainization of Russophone politicians joining the political elite in Kiev on a national level with special emphasis on the two presidents that fall into the latter category. It seems, then, reasonable to look for possible pattern changes in both rhetoric and behavior in their respective approaches to the nationality question at the time leading up to, and, subsequently, the time following their inaugurations. Accordingly, it has been a main objective for me to identify and address literature and other sources where such information is expressed. It is in my view necessary, however, not only to examine how the respective presidents and their administrations have acted, but also how their actions are *perceived* by the Ukrainian population, both the Russophone and the Ukrainian-speaking parts, not to mention the Russian Federation. It should also be of great interest to see how the research community and other observers, both inside and outside of Ukraine, interpret statements made and actions taken by the actors in question.

As both presidential candidates and presidents are very public figures in Ukraine as in most countries, the amount of data available on their actions and statements is substantial. This goes not only for textual, typically qualitative, data, such as transcripts from public appearances, newspaper articles, press releases, legislation, books, journals, etc., but also for quantitative data, such as opinion polls and the like. Documentary movies and other audiovisual sources, such as sound and video recordings from press conferences, interviews and so on, may also provide useful information. The volume and variety of available information and sources confronts a researcher of high level politicians in Ukraine with the great challenge of selecting the most relevant from a tremendous amount of empirical data. This has been a challenge also for me, but at the same time a blessing in the sense that it has allowed me to draw on a wide range of data, which are collected through a variety of methods. *Using multiple sources of evidence* coincides with Robert K. Yin's first out of three principles of data collection, the other two being *creating a case study database* and

maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin 2009: pp.114-124). I have to the best of my ability tried to follow up on these principles in the data collection process.

As indicated, I draw on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in this thesis. The combination of the two types of data does, according to Sigmund Grønmo, implies that we seek to shed light on the same research question or questions by applying different methods. This can prove useful since qualitative and quantitative data by themselves lack qualities that the other possesses (Grønmo 1998: p98). Citing Todd Jick, Grønmo stresses that if the researcher achieves the same results by using different methods, this adds credibility to the analytical result. Should there be discrepancies in the analytical results obtained through different methods, however, then this can in turn stimulate such for alternative interpretations and contribute to the development of new approaches (Jick, cited in Grønmo 1998: pp.98-99). In light of this, I have chosen to expand my qualitative case study database with some quantitative data, namely public opinion polls.

It is my understanding that any researcher of foreign countries usually will benefit greatly from spending time in the country investigated. Not only will first-hand knowledge of a given culture make the researcher better able to analyze why actors within it act the way they do, it also broadens the available source material substantially. Ukraine is no exception to this, and this is also why I visited the country twice during the course of writing this thesis (16.09.13-11.10.13 and 31.03.14-07.04.14). In particular I found it useful to conduct interviews with local respondents who monitor Ukrainian politics on a day-to-day basis. I also found that a large amount of relevant textual data, which otherwise would have been hard, or even impossible, to access, became available to me as I arrived in Kiev. In particular this concerned access to the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine's *Gazetny Fond*, which holds the largest newspaper collection in Ukraine.

2.5.1 Interviews

The personal interview may serve as a very useful means of obtaining qualitative data for a research project. This view is shared by Yin (2009: p.106), who states that the interview constitutes "one of the most important sources of case study information". Not only can the interviewee provide new and relevant information on a given topic, he or she may also elaborate on earlier made comments and shed new light on information already available to the researcher. A well-informed interviewee can also be of great help to the

researcher in identifying other relevant sources. For these reasons, it was natural for me to expand my case study database with a few personal interviews.

During my second visit to Kiev I conducted a total of five personal and formalized semi-structured interviews with various respondents, all of whom reside in Kiev and follow the political situation in Ukraine on a day-to-day basis. These respondents were: Taras Zahorodniy at the Taras Zahorodniy Political Consultant center; Philosopher and Consultant at the Strategic Consulting Corporation "Gardarika", Sergey Datsyuk; Director at the Centre for Political Studies "Penta", Volodymyr Fesenko; Journalist and political scientist, Dmitry Dzangirov; and Aleksey Panych, Professor of Philosophy and Senior Researcher at "Spirit and Letter" Publishing house⁵.

I will draw on these interviews throughout the remainder of this thesis. The interviews were all conducted in Russian and were recorded on a dictaphone for subsequent analysis after my return to Oslo. Although the presence of a tape-recorder in some cases may affect the interviewee's answers, my general impression was that my respondents, who willingly gave their permission for me to record the conversation, paid little if any attention to the dictaphone. The interviews were not transcribed in full, but thorough notes were made to each of them. Wherever the respondents are cited with direct quotations in this thesis, I have made a transcription of the quote in Russian before I subsequently translated it into English. The duration of the interviews varied from less than twenty minutes to over one and a half hour.

In addition to these formalized interviews I spent much of my time in Kiev conversing with ordinary citizens in various settings such as in bars, during taxi-rides or simply on the street. These conversations were not recorded, and I will draw on them only loosely throughout the remainder of this thesis. These informal conversations were nevertheless important in the sense that they captured some general sentiments present in the population and shed some light on how ordinary Ukrainians relate to the concept of "the Ukrainian nation". It should be noted, however, that the frequency of anti-Russian views increased manifold from my first to my second visit. This is hardly surprising, however, as my second visit to Kiev took place after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 by the Russian Federation. It should also be noted that Russia at the time had stationed approximately 40 000 troops along the eastern Ukrainian Border, and that the fear of an imminent Russian invasion of Eastern Ukraine deeply affected Ukrainians in their views.

⁵ For detailed information on the interviews, see the literature list.

3 Leonid Kuchma

As I initially touched upon, Ukraine has since it gained its independence had four elected presidents, two of which are usually associated with pro-Russian policies. This assertion, however, needs to be elaborated. The fact that Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovich both arrived in Kiev from Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine, and are themselves native speakers of this language, can by itself hardly be sufficient to gain them a reputation of being pro-Russian politicians.

The main objective of this and the following chapter is twofold. Firstly, they seek to provide a short overview over the political trajectory of two presidents, with special emphasis on their expressed political stances on the language question and foreign relations in the time leading up to their electoral victories, and, in turn, during their respective presidential periods. Secondly, these chapters seek to identify elements in their rhetoric and political stances that can be labeled as pro-Russian, the presence of which should be seen as validating Kolstø's hypothesis of an alleged Ukrainization of the Russophone political elite in Kiev.

3.1 Background

"Если мне ставится в вину все негативное, что произошло в Украине за 10 лет моего пребывания на посту президента, в период, когда надо было перестраивать все и вся, создавать фактически с нуля новое государство, новую политическую систему, принципиально новую экономику, то, по справедливости, на мой счет должно быть отнесено и все позитивное, достигнутое в процессе этих системных преобразований" (Kuchma 2007).

This rather defensive remark is taken from Leonid Danylovych Kuchma's diary-like memoirs published in 2007. It bears witness to a former President faced with a long list of accusations from various quarters. These accusations included not only murder⁶, election rigging, high level corruption and abuse of office, but also a more general assertion that Kuchma had derailed the country's transition to a liberal democracy, and put Ukraine on a more authoritarian path (Kuzio 2005). The latter view is among others shared by Andrew

⁶ Leonid Kuchma was in 2000 through the "Cassette scandal" or "Kuchmagate" linked to the disappearance and subsequent murder of journalist and corruption-fighter Georgiy Gongadze. According to audio recordings made by his own bodyguard, Mykola Mel'nychenko, Kuchma had supposedly ordered Ukraine's special services to "take care" of Gongadze. Kuchma was formally charged with involvement in the murder on the 24th of March 2011, but the charges were dropped later the same year.

Wilson, who notes that "[...] his second term (1999-2004) was marked by political drift and a revision to semi-authoritarianism and corruption at the highest levels" (Wilson 2009: p.311).

There is in other words a great deal of controversy attached to the Kuchma era in Ukrainian politics. Although the Orange Revolution was triggered mainly by the massive fraud in the October 2004 presidential elections that initially got Viktor Yanukovych elected as Kuchma's successor, it seems reasonable to argue that the "orange" uprising to a large extent was based on an underlying discontent with the political leadership as such, and that this was present in the Ukrainian population at the time of these elections. The events that led up to and triggered the Orange Revolution are complex, and analyzing them in full goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is nevertheless relevant to determine to what extent this discontent originated from issues related to the nationality question, as it is likely to tell us much about whether Kuchma's nation-building efforts over his decade as President succeeded or failed. When looking for signs of any "pro-Russianness" and Ukrainization in Kuchma's nationality policies, it would in my view be a mistake not also to assess some of his early years and attach some emphasis to the fact that he was born and raised in the Soviet Union.

Kuchma was the second President of Ukraine. He initially came to power in June 1994, and was later, as the only president to have achieved this, reelected in November 1999. When he replaced his predecessor Leonid Kravchuk on the 19th of July 1994 he served as the second of by now four elected presidents of independent Ukraine. Kuchma had then beaten Kravchuk in the presidential elections' second round, receiving 52.3% of the votes against Kravchuk's 45.2%. He had been member of the Communist Party of Soviet Union since 1960, but it was only toward the end of the 1980s that he started devoting himself to politics. Having spent most of his grown up life working within the field of aerospace engineering, he was elected Member of Parliament in 1990. He was later appointed Ukraine's second Prime Minister in October 1992, a post he left already a year later complaining that the pace of reform was too slow.

It was his background from the A.M. Makarov Yuzhny Machine-Building Plant in Dnipropetrovsk that, according to several respondents interviewed for this thesis, provided him with his biggest advantage as a politician. The fact that he was a real statesman (*gosudarstvennik*) who had participated in big projects in the Soviet Union enabled him to fully understand the concept of statehood, it was claimed. Another point frequently made by several of my respondents in this regard was how his Soviet style of *thinking* enabled

Kuchma to understand the delicacy of the nationality issue. The latter points were highlighted as two of the main differences between him and Viktor Yanukovych, to which I shall return more thoroughly.

It seems that much of Kuchma's image as a pro-Russian politician was formed during the 1994 presidential campaign. Set against incumbent president Kravchuk, whose Ukrainianizing policies had gained him the reputation of being a nationalist, Western media were quick to portray the campaign largely as a battle of politicized regionalism between the eastern pro-Russian candidate Kuchma, and the western pro-Ukrainian candidate Kravchuk. According to Wilson, Kravchuk did himself contribute to this polarization by painting his opponent as a "dangerous Russophile" who would sell out the independence so recently won (Wilson 2005: p.38). The fact that the Ukrainian elections coincided with the presidential elections in neighboring Belarus was of no help to Kuchma's image. As he promoted closer ties to Russia, Western media drew a parallel to Belarusian presidential candidate Alexander Lukashenko, who allegedly was in favor of full reintegration with Russia (Kuzio 1997: pp.39-40).

As so often is the case in Ukraine, the distribution of votes followed clear geographical lines and provided strong confirmation of the political importance of regional differences in Ukrainian politics (Kolstø 2000: p.187). What is also worth noticing is how this geographical split of the Ukrainian electorate largely coincided with the eastern and the western regions' respective language of convenience:

Language of convenience:			Votes for Presidential Candidates:		
	East:	West:		East:	West:
Ukrainian:	18.5	77	Kravchuk:	26.3	70.8
Russian:	81.5	23	Kuchma:	73.1	24.3

Source: Arel & Khmelko (1996).

As pointed out by Arel and Khmelko (1996: p.81), the above outlined phenomenon constitutes a challenge for Ukraine (and other multicultural states) as convergence between cultural cleavages and electoral polarization along territorial lines may be interpreted as calling into question one of a state's most valuable assets: Its territorial integrity.

Having closely analyzed the 1994 presidential election campaign, Kuzio has argued that the media coverage of the campaign was largely misleading and contributed to the construction of what he refers to as "myths" about the two main candidates:

"The myths of Kravchuk as 'father of the nation', 'state-builder', 'nation defender' and 'true patriot' were as confusing and misplaced as Kuchma's alleged 'pro-Russianism' or 'Little Russianism'" (Kuzio 1997: p.39).

Kuzio bases his analysis on the actual content of their respective political stances as presented during the election campaign, and concludes that there in reality was little to differentiate between the two. In his view, the contest was in fact between two Ukrainian patriots, and it was rather the implementation of their respective policies that would differ as a consequence of their personal characters and visions of state- and nation-building. The electorate, in turn, voted in accordance with "how they view the past and the future" (ibid.). Kuzio downplays the assertion of Kuchma as a pro-Russian politician, and makes reference to the following points:

- Kuchma did on no occasion call for political-military integration with the CIS.
- Maintaining economic ties with Russia was never rejected by *any* Ukrainian presidential candidate.
- As Prime Minister Kuchma openly complained about pressure being exerted on Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

Although Kuchma often is associated with a severe regression of the post-Soviet Ukrainian democratic development, the experts interviewed for this paper nevertheless put emphasis on many of his achievements during his first term, rather than the democratic regression during his second term. Director at the Taras Zahorodniy Political Consultant Center, Taras Zahorodniy, described Kuchma as "the greatest President in the history of independent Ukraine" (Zahorodniy 2014, author's interview). Philosopher and Consultant at the Strategic Consulting Corporation "Gardarika", Sergey Datsyuk, largely shared this enthusiasm, but he made a clear distinction between Kuchma's two terms in office: "I have only good things to say about Kuchma's first term", he stated (Datsyuk 2014, author's interview).

3.2 The language issue

One of the most controversial issues in public discourse and political process in Ukraine is the so-called language problem, which first and foremost concerns the status of the Russian language. The issue of upgrading the status of Russian to a second state language has continuously been raised over the years, but such an upgrade has yet to

materialize. Considering that the topic according to a 2013 public opinion survey is in fact one of the *least* worrisome to Ukrainians⁷, it comes off as a paradox that it on some level can be said, in the most extreme consequence, to threaten the integrity of Ukraine. This has recently become evident, as the language issue seems to provide additional nourishment to separatist sentiments in the country's eastern and southern regions. This, in turn, underlines why the language issue and a sensible handling of it are of critical importance to any President of Ukraine.

The correct balancing of status of and scope for the use of the country's most widespread languages, Ukrainian and Russian, was particularly important in the early years of independence as the post-Soviet states proved vulnerable to political turmoil. In 1989 the total population of Ukraine amounted to 51.5 million people. Among the 11.4 million Russians, close to everybody declared Russian their native language. 4.7 million out of the 37.4 million Ukrainians also declared Russian their native language. Furthermore, those primarily using that language in everyday life amounted to at least half of the population (Kulyk 2013: p.282).

Given this linguistic division of the population, we understand how a too nationalist approach to the issue could easily anger the large Russian minority and the Russophone Ukrainians. Granting Russian the status of state language, on the other hand, would with probability have had a similar effect on the Ukrainophone part of the population. The result was somewhat of a compromise, clearly aimed at pleasing both the Russophone and the Ukrainophone part of the population. The status of Ukrainian as the sole state language was confirmed in the Constitution of 1996 which affirms that:

"The State language of Ukraine shall be the Ukrainian language. The State ensures the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine" (Zakonodatel'stva Ukrainy 1996).

At the same time the Constitution made, although equating it with other minority languages, clear provisions about the Russian language as it states:

⁷ In a public opinion survey conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" in May 2013, as little as 3% of the respondents listed "Russian language status" as one out of three issues most important *to Ukraine*. The regional distribution of the responses varied only marginally, and even in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, where the largest portions of Russophones are residing, the corresponding number was also 3%. When the question was rephrased to concern the three most important issues for the respondent *personally*, the number rose to 6% in the southern region, but was nevertheless beaten by as much as thirteen other issues (Sociological Group "Rating" 2013).

"Free development, use and protection of Russian and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine shall be guaranteed in Ukraine" (ibid.).

As pointed out by Oksana King, however, the real place of the Russian language in Ukraine is hard to define. According to her, "it cannot be qualified either as a regional or a minority language, as it is spoken throughout the country by almost half the population, and practically everyone in Ukraine has knowledge of the language" (King 2008: p.46).

To better understand why the language issue was of such vital importance in the early years of independence, we can consult Janmaat who has pointed out four reasons why newly independent Ukraine makes out a particularly interesting case of language politics:

1. Ukraine is home to more than eleven million Russians. These Russians form, in absolute terms, the biggest non-titular national group in all the successor states, the Russian Federation included.
2. To this Russophone part of the population is added a large number of titular Ukrainians who prefer to communicate in Russian and thus speak the titular language, Ukrainian, only as a second language⁸.
3. There is a significant linguistic similarity between Russian and Ukrainian⁹. With little effort, Ukrainians and Russians can understand each other's languages even if they have never heard the other language before.
4. The various regions of Ukraine, each having had their own particular historical background, have never before formed an entity as an independent state (Janmaat 2000: pp.12-13).

Kuchma is often referred to as a Russian-speaking Ukrainian from Dnipropetrovsk (Kolstø 2000, Janmaat 2000, Matuszak 2012). This is not entirely accurate as he first arrived this vital industrial center of Ukraine only in 1955, at the age of 17 (Korzh 2005). He was in fact born and raised in Chernihiv Oblast. The linguistic situation there is quite different from that in the city of Dnipropetrovsk, as a total of 85.7% of the population in 1989 considered Ukrainian their native language, the corresponding figure for Russian being a mere 13.6% (Gosudarstvennyj Komitet Statistiki Ukrainy 2001). Korzh has noted that there in Kuchma's

⁸ Language of preference of the two main national groups in Ukraine (Source: Gosudarstvennyj Komitet Statistiki Ukrainy 2001):

Ukrainians:	85.2% (Ukrainian speakers)	14.8% (Russian speakers)	
Russians:	95.9% (Russian speakers)	3.9% (Ukrainian speakers)	0.2% (another language)

⁹ According to Ukrainian linguist Kostiantyn Tyshchenko (2000, cited by Bilaniuk & Melnyk 2008: p.344), Ukrainian and Russian differ by 38% in lexicon, the remaining 62% consistin Bilaniuk g of 44% morphemically identical and 18% morphemically similar terms.

home town of Chaikyne was spoken a mixture of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian (Korzh 2005), a mixture commonly referred to as *surzhik*.

Based on this, it seems reasonable to assume that Kuchma on some level must have been exposed to the Ukrainian language and/or the closely related *surzhik* in his childhood years and adolescence. Washington Post reporter Chrystia Freeland also picked up on this, as she the day before Kuchma's inauguration noted that he was "increasingly reverting to the Ukrainian language of his childhood" (Washington Post 1994). This can, at least partly, explain how Kuchma so surprisingly fast was able to learn (or rather to refresh his knowledge of) the titular language, and practically convert from Russian to Ukrainian once he became president. Of greater interest, however, is his motivation for doing so. Kuzio argues:

"Kuchma, a Russian-speaking Ukrainian, began learning the Ukrainian language prior to the presidential elections for two reasons. First, both President Kravchuk and parliamentary speaker Moroz, like his predecessor Pliushch, spoke Ukrainian. Secondly, the law on presidential elections specified that candidates had to know the state language" (Kuzio 1997: p.50).

Kuzio's reference is made to *The Ukrainian Presidential Election Law*, a bill introduced by Leonid Kravchuk just months before the 1994 elections making it clear that any president of Ukraine must master the state language:

"The President of Ukraine may only be a citizen of Ukraine, who on the day of the presidential elections has reached the age of thirty five, who possesses the right to vote, who masters the state language, and who has lived permanently in Ukraine for ten years prior to election day" (Zakonodatel'stva Ukrainy 2012).

There are also other laws facilitating the use of Ukrainian by politicians in the public domain, such as the Verkhovna Rada procedural rules, which were adopted on the 27th of July 1994, only days after Kuchma's inauguration. Article 1.0.3, sections 1 and 2 state that:

"1. Работа Верховной Рады Украины ведется на государственном языке. 2. В случае, когда выступающий не владеет государственным языком, он имеет право выступать на другом языке. О своем намерении выступить на другом языке выступающий заранее сообщает председательствующему на заседании в заявлении на выступление, если желает, чтобы был обеспечен перевод его выступления на украинский язык. Секретариат Верховной Рады обеспечивает перевод его выступления на украинский язык" (Liga Zakon 2006).

Although Ukrainian officially gained its status as the sole state language in Ukraine only two years later through the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine, it was already when Kuchma took office evident that Ukrainian was chosen as the preferred language of the

public political discourse in Kiev. It therefore seems almost unthinkable that the President of Ukraine would not at the very least make a wholehearted attempt to learn and master the language. Kuchma was in other words expected to do this not solely because the law formally required him to, but because failing to do so effectively would make the Head of State an outcast in the political discourse. It also seems reasonable to assume that this, for the latter and other reasons, would be in the personal interest of any candidate, as refusing to do so, ultimately and arguably, would alienate him to large portions of the electorate. I will return more thoroughly to this particular topic under the equivalent subsection in the next chapter.

During the 1994 presidential campaign Kuchma announced his intentions to bolster the Russian language in Ukraine by granting it the status of a second official language. At first glance this may come off as a pro-Russian stance, serving only the interests of the Russophone part of the population. Be that as it may, according to Taras Kuzio this stance was nevertheless shared by Kuchma's main opponent, the Ukrainophone and allegedly "nationalist" Leonid Kravchuk (Kuzio 1997: p.50). Could it be that this common stance on the issue was not as much a matter of being pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian, as it was a pragmatic approach to a touchy subject at a time when an increase in ethnical tension could bring about devastating consequences?

As dissimilating nationality policies towards the Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics of Latvia and Estonia caused great discontent and ethnical tension, similar sentiments in Ukraine could have proven disastrous given the size of the Russian diaspora. It seemed, in other words, vital that the Russians felt included in the nation-building processes. This also appears to have been a strong motive for granting all Soviet citizens living in Ukraine at the time it became independent, Ukrainian citizenship regardless of their language or ethnic origin (Polese 2011: p.41).

Kuchma put great emphasis on the multinational character of the Ukrainian state in his inauguration speech:

"We have to understand that Ukraine is a multinational state. Any attempt to ignore this fact threatens to profoundly split society and to ruin the idea of Ukrainian statehood. Ukraine is the motherland for all its citizens, irrespective of their nationality, religion, and mother tongue. In the short term I have the intention to propose a change in the current legislation in order to give Russian the status of a second official language while preserving Ukrainian as a state language" (Kuchma, cited by Laitin 1998: pp.99-100).

The expectations to Kuchma's presidency were therefore, needless to say, high among the Russophone electorate as the newly independent state in his first term, as the last of all the Soviet successor states to do so, was to draw up and adopt a constitution. By the time the Ukrainian Supreme Rada got around to do this in 1996, however, Kuchma had managed to confuse many of his supporters by very quickly having learned Ukrainian, a language he by then used in most public appearances. Laitin has noted that "Leonid Kuchma, the president of Ukraine, campaigned in Russian, but has governed exclusively in Ukrainian" (ibid.: p.140).

In another surprise move Kuchma also failed to keep his promise to lift the status of Russian in the new constitution. As we have seen, he left Ukrainian as the sole state language and equated Russian with other minority languages, such as Bulgarian and Moldovan. According to Polese, Kuchma had then realized the extreme sensitivity of the issue, and how mishandling it could impact negatively not only on his chances for political survival, but also on the sustainability of the Ukrainian state (Polese 2011: p.42). This does, at least partly, explain why he during his campaign promoted an upgrade of the Russian language status only to discard it once he became President.

As argued by Janmaat, the Ukrainization policy of the Kravchuk years was basically consolidated as officials appointed by Kuchma, such as the Minister of Education, Michael Zgurovsky, neither revoked the strict language regulations introduced by the Kravchuk regime, nor issued new orders (Janmaat 2000: p.69). For instance, the *Law On Television and Radio Broadcasting* of December 1993 was left untouched by Kuchma. This law stated that Ukrainian should be the language of radio and TV, and allowed minority languages to function in the mass media only in those places where the corresponding nationality "lives compactly". Left untouched were also several controversial measures taken in the realm of education by Kravchuk's appointed Minister of Education, Petro Talanchuk. In accordance with these, teachers who switched to Ukrainian as their language of instruction were offered "moral and material encouragement". They also introduced administrative incentives for Russian schools to open only Ukrainian classes, such as priority in receiving textbooks (ibid.: p.66-67).

In fact, Kuchma continued to pave the way for a spread of Ukrainian as the main language in the country with his language policies. Two laws that came into force in 1998, one of which required all official documents to be written in Ukrainian, the other increasing the pressure on schools to use Ukrainian as their language of instruction (Polese 2011: p.42),

also bear witness to a Ukrainianized president. The results of these policies soon became evident as the number of pre-schools in Ukrainian rose from 51% in 1991, to 76% by 2000. Primary and secondary schools had a similar development, and within the same time frame the number of schools using Ukrainian as their language of instruction rose from 49% to 70%.

This information may very well serve as evidence in support of Kolstø's hypothesis. We can also find other indications of Kuchma's pro-Ukrainian approach in the language issue, or rather a reluctance of promoting the Russian language as promised during his election campaign. In particular we can look at the circumstances surrounding the initial ratification process of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* after Ukraine, as the fifth state to do so, signed the Charter in Strasbourg on the 2nd of May 1996. According to Michael Moser, the history of the Charter in Ukraine was very problematic already from the outset (Moser 2013: p.71). Moser stresses that Ukraine signed the Charter "basically because it was required to do so in order to become a new member state of the Council of Europe" (ibid.).

The Law on International Treaties of Ukraine established that international treaties signed by Ukraine was to be ratified by the Parliament through approval of a special law on ratification, which in turn required the signature of the Chairman of Parliament. The Verkhovna Rada passed the first draft of the Ukrainian version of the Charter on the 24th of December 1999, and Chairman of Parliament Alexander Tkachenko signed it into law. It entered into force on the 30th of December 1999.

Pro-Ukrainian members of Parliament instantly blamed pro-Russian oriented representatives for having manipulated the draft significantly to their own advantage (King 2008: p.50). As pointed out by Larisa Masenko, this law did in fact grant the Russian language the same rights as the state language in administrative-territorial units where the number of regional language speakers residing on that territory constituted 100,000 or more citizens. Under the given circumstances, the Russian language *de facto* could claim equality to Ukrainian in as much as 16 of Ukraine's 24 oblasts, as well as in the autonomous republic of Crimea and the two cities with special status: Kiev and Sevastopol (Masenko 2004). Another "major misunderstanding" in this first draft law on ratification was the fact that it listed *nationalities* rather than *languages*. This contradicted the Charter itself, as it was expressly not designed for minority groups, but for languages (Moser 2013: p.72). Moser, in turn, underlines the great paradox that representatives of the Communist Party of Ukraine,

despite their generally anti-European stance, were the most ardent supporters of the Charter in Ukraine (ibid.).

Although the law formally entered into force, it had limited practical effect as the Constitutional Court of Ukraine only months later, on the 12th of July 2000, decided that the ratification process had followed unconstitutional lines:

"The Law on the Ratification of the European Charter of Regional or of Minority Languages 1992, dated 24 December 1999, was found to be unconstitutional, due to the failure to comply with requirements related to the procedure of its signing. The provisions of Article 7.1 of the Law on International Treaties of the Ukraine were also found to be unconstitutional in so far as the procedure it laid down for signing a law on the ratification by the Ukraine of an international treaty failed to comply with the constitutional provisions on the counter-signature and promulgation of laws by the President" (Constitutional Court of Ukraine 2000).

Kuchma's position in this particular process remains unclear. Neither was he in any way directly involved in the ratification process itself, nor did he sign the bill into law, which usually is the case with Ukrainian legislation. Masenko has gone so far as to claim that:

"Throughout his entire presidency he showed himself as a person with an undefined position within the language debate" (Masenko 2004).

Nevertheless, Kuchma's subsequent behavior following the Constitutional Court ruling may indicate that he was in fact against the bill. When a coalition of 282 Members of the Parliament in September the same year encouraged Kuchma to submit a proposal for the same law on ratification of the Charter, this time in accordance with the procedures stipulated by the Constitutional Court, Kuchma chose to ignore the petition (Baulin 2003). Going against the Parliament majority, and also his own outspoken promises six years earlier to raise the status of the Russian language in the process, seemingly bears witness to a Ukrainianized president.

Instead of following up on the initial draft law, Kuchma did not only once, but three times, submit alternative draft laws to Parliament. The first of these, which was submitted a year after the Constitutional Court ruling, on the 12th of September 2001, was significantly altered, and the articles ensuring an upgrade of the status of the Russian language were all gone. The Verkhovna Rada did not adopt this draft; neither did it adopt the second draft submitted by Kuchma on the 26th of October 2002 (Moser 2013: p.72). It was only the third of Kuchma's draft laws on ratification that passed through Parliament on the 15th of May

2003. Considering how the initial law on ratification had been dismissed by the Constitutional Court as unconstitutional, it comes off as a paradox that this fourth and final draft law was pushed through Parliament despite several questionable circumstances:

- a) The draft provided no information on the financial and organizational entailments of the draft law, as stipulated by Ukrainian law.
- b) Although the Verkhovna Rada initially rejected it on the 17th of April, the very same draft law was again voted on a month later despite the fact that it was not even included on the agenda at the time.
- c) The draft was put to the vote in the Verkhovna Rada despite the rule that the Ukrainian Parliament is not entitled to vote on a rejected draft law during the same or the following session (ibid.: p.73).

The circumstances surrounding the ratification process of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in Ukraine, as discussed above, bear witness to a President reluctant to upgrading the status of the Russian language. This fierce resistance seems paradoxical as he in his inauguration speech promised the exact opposite, and this may in turn serve as evidence for Kolstø's hypothesis of Ukrainization. This is, however, not the sole reason why I have devoted this much attention to the Charter. Since its adoption, this document has continued to lie at the very foundation of Ukrainian language policies through shifting presidents. "Securing the rights" of the Russian-speaking population in accordance with the Charter was to become Viktor Yanukovich's mantra years later, to which I shall return in the following chapter.

3.3 Foreign policy

Another parameter, which shall be thoroughly discussed in this thesis, is how Kuchma and Yanukovich respectively have approached the issue of foreign policies. As Ukraine is *caught in the middle* between Russia in the east and the European Union/NATO in the west, who all consider their neighbor to be strategically highly important in a geopolitical sense, it is reasonable to assume that we can learn something about the two Presidents' stands on the nationality issue from analyzing which way they tend to lean on this particular topic. Neither can foreign policy be ignored as this paper sets out to shed light on how Russia, as a national homeland to the Russian minority in Ukraine, and Ukraine, as a

nationalizing state, interact with each other within the scope of Brubaker's triadic nexus model.

As we have seen, the media may well have blown the alleged pro-Russianism of Kuchma and the pro-Ukrainianism of Kravchuk out of proportions, and thus constructed a larger gap between the two candidates than what was actually the case. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Kuchma during his election campaign promoted closer ties with Russia as a means of lifting Ukraine out of the economic quagmire it was sinking into at the time. Separating Ukraine's economy from Russia had been needlessly destructive, he claimed in an attempt to capture the east-Ukrainian vote (D'Anieri 2012: p.449). Kravchuk, on the other hand, appealed to the Ukrainophones and their hopes of economic recovery through linkage with Europe (Wilson 2009: p.184). Kuzio has noted that the manner, in which the two candidates described Russia, in particular whether they viewed it as "The Other" or as a "Strategic Partner", influenced voters' attitudes (Kuzio 1997: p.51).

Although Kuchma promoted an agenda of closer ties with the Russian Federation during his campaign, he went to great lengths to reassure the West of continued good relations. As he in spring 1994 was invited by ex-president Richard Nixon to visit the USA, it became vital for him to use this opportunity to convince Washington that his candidacy in no way posed a threat to US-Ukrainian relations, should he win the presidential elections. Kuchma's main challenge during this trip soon proved to be to justify his proclaimed intentions of strengthening Ukraine's relations with Russia. According to Korzh, Kuchma maintained that closer ties to Russia in no way equated discontinuity of good relations with the West. Neither did it pose a threat to Ukraine's statehood, he claimed (Korzh 2005). His opponents rapidly repeated the accusation that Kuchma intended to sell out Ukraine's sovereignty during the campaign. Kuchma recalls:

"I was subjected to severe criticism from everywhere. Although criticism I can deal with. This, however, turned into pure deception of the voters. [...] My calls for friendship and cooperation with Russia were presented as an attempt to give up Ukrainian sovereignty. [...] They even warned against the outbreak of a civil war in Ukraine, should I win the elections" (Kuchma, cited by Korzh 2005).

Kuchma won the elections with a narrow margin, and was inaugurated on the 19th of July 1994. In his inauguration speech he repeated his commitment to strengthening Ukraine's bonds to Russia, seemingly affirming his pro-Russian approach to foreign policy:

"[...] of fundamental importance is the normalization of relations with Russia, our strategic partner. The first step in this direction will be the signing of a comprehensive agreement on economic

cooperation with the Russian Federation [...] This agreement will be a good basis for the solution of political and economic misunderstandings that have accumulated in the relations between Ukraine and Russia" (Kuchma, cited by Rabochaya gazeta 1994).

Shortly after, however, he also emphasized that "the relationship with countries of the West must be filled with new real content", adding that "it is necessary to move as soon as possible from exchanging declarations to having a full-fledged economic cooperation, and to resolutely eliminate artificial obstacles" (ibid.). Already at this early stage it seemed that Kuchma intended to look both ways in his foreign policy, taking a pragmatic approach to the matter. Kuchma's outreach to the West confirmed The Washington Post reporter Chrystia Freeland's predictions, as she a day prior to the inauguration presented him as an embracer of reforms with a "healthy wariness of mother Russia" (Washington Post 1994). According to her, the president-elect appeared ready to "implement policies which, under a different leader, would provoke the fiercest outcry from his own constituencies" (ibid.).

If Freeland's predictions were correct, it would be hard to classify Kuchma as pro-Russian in absolute terms at this point, even if this had been a widespread perception throughout his campaign. In other words, the *perception* of Kuchma as a pro-Russian candidate provided him with expanded maneuverability in his nationality policies vis-à-vis his constituencies, as he was not under suspicion of being a "dangerous nationalist", as was allegedly the case with Kravchuk. A parallel can here be drawn to former U.S. President Richard Nixon, with whom Kuchma met shortly prior to becoming President of Ukraine. Being a republican he was in no ways perceived as being "soft on communism", and this, in turn, made it easier for him to develop U.S. diplomatic relations with China.

After taking office, Kuchma instantly revealed a tendency of leaning westwards in his foreign policies, and his first term proved to be a period of highly intensive dialogue with the Western institutions (Kapitonenko 2009: p.441). Following up on Kravchuk's signing on to the NATO's Partnership for Peace programme (PfP), as the first CIS country to do so, and signing of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union in June 1994, Kuchma had Ukraine accepted into the Council of Europe in 1995. Furthermore, the cooperation with NATO grew rapidly, and on the 9th of July 1997 Kuchma signed the *NATO-Ukraine Special Partnership Charter*, which determines the political commitments of the parties and defines the content of the "special partnership" between NATO and Ukraine (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine 2014). A year later he once again, much to the disappointment of the eastern electorate, reached out to the West as he issued the decree

Strategy for Integration of Ukraine into the European Union (Kuzmin & Maksymenko 2012: p.14).

All of these moves bear witness to a Ukrainianized President, and hence may they serve as evidence for Kolstø's hypothesis. In my view, however, Kolstø does in his reasoning insufficiently emphasize the larger political picture in which this Ukrainization is taking place. As we saw in the previous subsection, Kuchma was faced with a different political reality once he became President, and was on some level forced to make necessary linguistic adjustments to meet the informal requirements of the people and the formal requirements of the law. In this process Kuchma went from "Romanticism" to "Pragmatism/Realism" when he formulated his new policies (Kuzio 1997: pp.91-92). Not least, Kuzio argues, did this happen due to the narrow margin with which Kuchma had won the election. With such a slight majority, Kuchma realized how rapidly his popularity could dwindle after much needed; yet possibly painful, economic reforms were implemented (ibid.). It was in other words necessary to overcome the traditional regional divisions in Ukraine in order to secure future support.

This reasoning by Kuzio draws our attention back to Kolstø's thoughts on how the "power elite" in Kiev makes concessions to the "ethnic romantics". It appears as if Kuzio, just like Kolstø, has detected a transformed President, although he describes the process through which this happened slightly differently. Whereas Kuzio sees Kuchma as having abandoned (pro-Russian) "Romanticism" in a transition to "Pragmatism/Realism", Kolstø on his part claims that the Ukrainianizing influence Kiev exerted on him drew him closer to (Ukrainian) "Romanticism" *through* "Pragmatism/Realism". These terminological nuances, however, are very thin, and it appears to me that they in the end point to the same thing. The fact that other scholars also have picked up on Kuchma's transformation process, may serve as evidence for Kolstø's hypothesis. To what extent, then, was this transformation to "Pragmatism"/"Realism" evident within the realm of foreign policy?

Tor Bukkvoll provides a useful perspective in his analysis of Ukrainian foreign policy within the context of the Russia-Ukraine-NATO triangle. According to him, the real turning point came in 1993 when the pro-Western faction in the Russian foreign policy establishment lost its influence (Bukkvoll 2000: p.9). Up until then both Russia and Ukraine had wanted to become part of the West, and as NATO-Russian relations soured, Ukraine found itself in a unique position to exploit the situation to its own advantage.

"The result was a triangular power game whose logic more and more became zero-sum, based on the premises of the Realist school in international relations" (ibid.).

Kuzio has also noted how Ukraine's foreign policy became more mature and professional starting from November 1993, and he stresses how relations subsequently improved greatly with the West and, to a lesser extent, with Russia (Kuzio 1997: p.180).

One historic event that took place during Kuchma's first term was when Ukraine on the 2nd of June 1996 officially lost its status as a nuclear power. It should be noted that the process of nuclear disarmament of Ukraine was initiated as early as in 1990 when the Verkhovna Rada on the 16th of July adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, which proclaims that:

"The Ukrainian SSR solemnly declares its intention of becoming a permanently neutral state that does not participate in military blocs and adheres to three nuclear free principles: to accept, to produce and to purchase no nuclear weapons" (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy 1990).

Kuchma did in other words not initiate the process. In fact, Kuchma showed a significant reluctance in giving up Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, and as Prime Minister he had in 1992 advocated a preservation of the most effective and powerful part of it¹⁰. Kuchma's main objection to the nuclear disarmament as President was that the security assurances offered to Ukraine by Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA through the *Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances*¹¹ in December 1994 were, according to him, worthless. Although this document undoubtedly was important in the sense that Russia by signing it formally recognized the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Kuchma nevertheless retained a certain amount of skepticism. In his memoirs he sarcastically notes that:

"В бумаге о гарантиях украинской безопасности со стороны стран Ядерного клуба нет ни слова о механизмах предоставления этих гарантий в тех случаях, когда возникает такая необходимость. Никакой методики! «Российская Федерация, Соединенное Королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии, Соединенные Штаты Америки и Украина будут консультироваться в случае возникновения ситуации, затрагивающей вопрос относительно этих обязательств», - сказано в «Меморандуме о гарантиях безопасности в связи с

¹⁰ It should be noted that Ukraine under Kravchuk hesitated in giving up its nuclear weapons arsenal. It was only in January 1994 that Ukraine finally signed a trilateral agreement with Russia and the US, which would allow for the dismantling of Ukraine's Intercontinental ballistic missiles.

¹¹ *The Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances* is a political agreement signed in Budapest, Hungary on the 5th of December 1994. Through the memorandum the three nuclear powers Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA provided security assurances to Ukraine in return for giving up the world's third largest nuclear weapons stockpile.

присоединением Украины к Договору о нераспространении ядерного оружия 5 декабря 1994 г.». Вот и вся конкретика. Ну хитрецы!" (Kuchma 2007).

The fact that Kuchma opposed giving up Ukraine's nuclear arsenal does not as such tell us much about any pro-Russianism or pro-Ukrainianism on his part, but it certainly indicates a skepticism towards Russia's intentions and promises. In light of this we can nevertheless learn something from his approach to this particular security issue. Kuchma's low confidence in the security assurances offered to Ukraine through the Budapest Memorandum may, at least partly, explain why NATO-Ukrainian cooperation flourished during Kuchma's first term. Ukraine needed "real" security assurances, and NATO saw an increasingly important strategic partner in Ukraine as Russia deviated from its pro-Western course. As argued by Bukkvoll, "[...] Ukraine was not only a country in the periphery but increasingly came to be seen as a potential strategic partner countering the power of Russia inside the CIS" (Bukkvoll 2000: p.12). If this was the case, it seems obvious that Kuchma did not pursue pro-Russian foreign policies.

One of Kuchma's main achievements within the realm of foreign policy came in May 1997, when Ukraine and Russia signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership. As we have seen, Leonid Kravchuk portrayed his opponent as a threat to Ukrainian sovereignty during the presidential campaign, and this rapprochement to Russia could at first glance come off as a pro-Russian move. With the signing of the treaty, however, Kuchma did in fact take a step further in consolidating Ukraine's independence. Through this treaty Russia reaffirmed Ukraine's sovereignty over its entire territory, including that of the Crimea Peninsula. Article 1 of the treaty states:

"As friendly, equal and sovereign states, the High Contracting Parties shall base their relations on mutual respect and trust, strategic partnership and cooperation" (jstor.org 1997).

As pointed out by D'Anieri, the treaty did largely serve Russia's needs in practical terms as it was granted a lease over its naval base in Sevastopol, home of the Black Sea Fleet (D'Anieri 2012: p.449). The Black Sea Fleet and the Sevastopol questions were hotly debated during the presidential campaign, and it was an issue that strongly separated the two candidates from each other. Whereas Kravchuk accused Kuchma of "giving away national territory" through his proposed policies, Kuchma claimed that Ukraine neither could finance the Black Sea Fleet, nor did the country require it militarily (Kuzio 1997: pp.51-52). The signing of the "big treaty", his critics would claim, confirmed Kuchma's pro-Russianness as it allowed Russian troops to be stationed on Ukrainian soil until the year 2007, with

automatic extensions for successive ten-year periods if neither party declared its wish to terminate it (jstor.org 1997).

Although largely serving Russia's need in practical terms, the treaty did nevertheless bring to an end the questions of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and as such brought Ukraine's period of state formation to a successful close (D'Anieri 2012: p.449). Buffa elaborates:

"For Ukraine, the Friendship Treaty was intended as a declaration of independence and sovereignty - a major step toward achieving self-determination and official recognition by Russia. For Russia, it seems that the drive behind the Friendship Treaty was twofold; while Russia surely wanted to maintain its diplomatic relationship with Ukraine, it also worried about solidifying its position at the strategic naval base in Sevastopol" (Buffa 2010: p.618).

It is also worth noting that the signing of the treaty followed a period of dramatic reduction in Ukrainian exports to the Russian Federation. In the first quarter of 1997 Russian imports from Ukraine was down 35.7% (equivalent to 445.6\$ US Dollars) compared to the same period in 1996 (Korzh 2005). Ukrainian exporters to Russia therefore warmly welcomed the signing of the treaty, and Kuchma himself refers to the signing as a "historic event" (Kuchma 2007).

This rapprochement to Russia, however, went hand in hand with a series of efforts to align Ukraine with the West. Not only did Kuchma reject any form of political or economic integration with Russia or the CIS, he also extended Kravchuk's policy of close interaction with NATO and the US (D'Anieri 2012: p.449). The fact that Kuchma went beyond Kravchuk in his efforts to integrate Ukraine westwards, seemingly weakens the notion of him as a pro-Russian President. It also largely confirms Kuzio's claim that the media blew the pro-Ukrainianism of Kravchuk, and the pro-Russianism of Kuchma out of proportions during the presidential campaign.

Kuchma's maneuvering game between the East and the West, constantly aiming at achieving the most favorable conditions for Ukraine in any given context, is today by a number of Ukrainian political experts perceived as largely successful. In fact, all of the respondents interviewed for this thesis agreed that Kuchma, despite the many controversies attached to his presidency, was the most successful of Ukraine's Presidents. This success, they claimed, was achieved much due to his broad understanding of how different vectors had to be kept in equilibrium, not least within the sphere of foreign policy. Kuchma's foreign policies are therefore often referred to as a *multi-vector doctrine* (*mnogovektornost*), and

according to Sergey Datsyuk he was the only President of Ukraine who fully understood this concept (Datsyuk 2014, author's interview). Political Scientist and Director at the Centre for Political Studies "Penta", Vladimir Fesenko, agrees. However, comparing the foreign policies pursued by Kuchma and Yanukovych respectively, Fesenko stressed that Kuchma's success was made possible partly by an external factor, namely a weak Russia:

"Kuchma knew how to maneuver. He finalized a number of agreements both with Russia and with the West on various issues; it was really a sly game. Russia let it pass for quite some time. One of the main reasons for this was that even during Putin's first term Russia was still relatively weak. Under Yanukovych, Russia had already emerged as a global power, and it had initiated its own integrational project. For this reason the pressure on Ukraine grew stronger. Accordingly, Kuchma's room for maneuver, the balancing between the West and Russia, if you will, drastically deteriorated. I believe this was the main difference between them" (Fesenko 2014, author's interview).

Whereas it has become customary to analyze Ukraine's foreign policy along a scale from pro-Russianism to pro-Westernism, it should be noted that Kuchma himself considered his orientation on the issue to be neither, but rather pro-Ukrainian (Kuzio 2004). As argued by Kuzio, however, pursuing a pro-Ukrainian foreign policy would require the "elaboration of the country's national interests" which, in his opinion, the executive and its oligarchic allies had been unable to do over 13 years of independence (ibid.). Paul D'Anieri largely shares Kuzio's perception of Ukraine's foreign policy as confusing and inconsistent, and points to three precarious balancing acts behind this passivity:

- An external balance between the pulls of Russia and the West.
- An internal balance between Ukraine's regions.
- An internal balance between democracy and authoritarianism (D'Anieri 2012).

The latter point would become increasingly evident during Kuchma's second term in office. Whereas Ukraine's relations with the West undoubtedly improved during his first term, they would take a turn for the worse during his second term. Although Ukraine continued on an overtly pro-European and pro-NATO course in its foreign policies, the relationship with the West nevertheless deteriorated quickly. There were several reasons for this cooling of the Ukrainian-Western relations. In this regard one can point to specific individual incidents that clearly contributed to the deterioration of the relationship. For instance, the alleged implication of Kuchma in the death of journalist Georgiy Gongadze nearly had Ukraine ejected from the Council of Europe in 2001. One year later, as the U.S. was preparing to invade Iraq, it emerged that Ukraine had violated the UN arms embargo by selling anti-aircraft systems to Iraq. Although other "unfortunate incidents" can be added to

this, the main reason for the deterioration of the relations was, according to D'Anieri, the increased tension between Ukraine's professed foreign policy priorities and the government's domestic behavior:

"Emblematic of this tension was the series of agreements negotiated between Ukraine and various Western actors, including the EU, NATO, and the U.S. government. Each of these agreements contained specific commitments by the Ukrainian side on matters such as economic reform, military reform, and business climate. Time after time, review sessions would find that the Ukrainian side had not met its obligations" (ibid.: p.449).

According to this analysis by D'Anieri, it was not a change in the *foreign policy priorities* that caused the cooling of the Ukrainian-Western relations, but rather an increasing inability (and/or unwillingness) to follow up on international obligations through domestic reform during Kuchma's second term. There are a number reasons why this happened. According to several of the respondents interviewed for this thesis, the most important reason for this was the emergence of a powerful and strong oligarchic system opposing reform. Datsyuk argued:

"During Kuchma's second term it became necessary to deoligarchize the economy. This is pretty much the same thing that Putin tried to do, but neither Putin nor Kuchma proved successful" (Datsyuk 2014, author's interview).

The formation of this system in Ukraine began immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it was only during Kuchma's first term that it was finally established firmly. Matuszak has described the nature of this system as follows:

"The mutual dependence between representatives of business and politics [...]. Members of the state apparatus derived benefits from the support offered by businessmen, and in return they made possible or at least turned a blind eye to widespread violations of the law in the process of privatization and doing business. The relations between representatives of business and politics also overlapped with the close links of both of these groups with the criminal underworld" (Matuszak 2012: p.13).

I will in the following not go into a detailed analysis of the Ukrainian oligarchic system as it as such falls beyond the scope of this thesis. It should nevertheless be devoted some attention as it sheds light on why Kuchma was increasingly unsuccessful within the realms of *both* domestic *and* foreign policy during his second term. This point was in fact made by all of my interviewees. In addition to pointing out how Kuchma increasingly was unable to handle the Ukrainian oligarchs, Journalist and Political Scientist, Dmitry Dzangirov, also questioned his willingness to do so. According to him, Kuchma had over time become increasingly involved in the non-transparent oligarch system, not least because

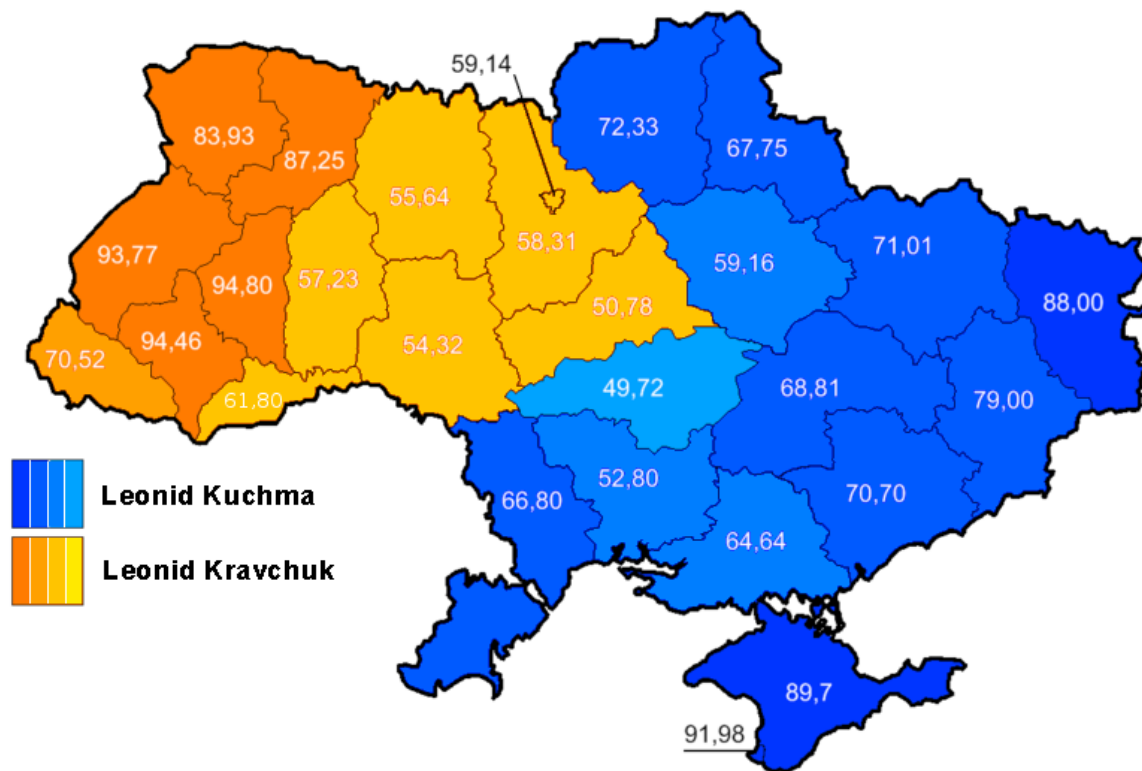
his daughter Olena Kuchma in 2002 married Viktor Pinchuk, one of Ukraine's wealthiest businessmen (Dzangirov 2014, author's interview). D'Anieri sums this up with the following observation:

"The predominance of private interests over those of the state severely constrained Ukraine from achieving goals that were widely pronounced and viewed by external analysts as important national goals" (D'Anieri 2012: p.433).

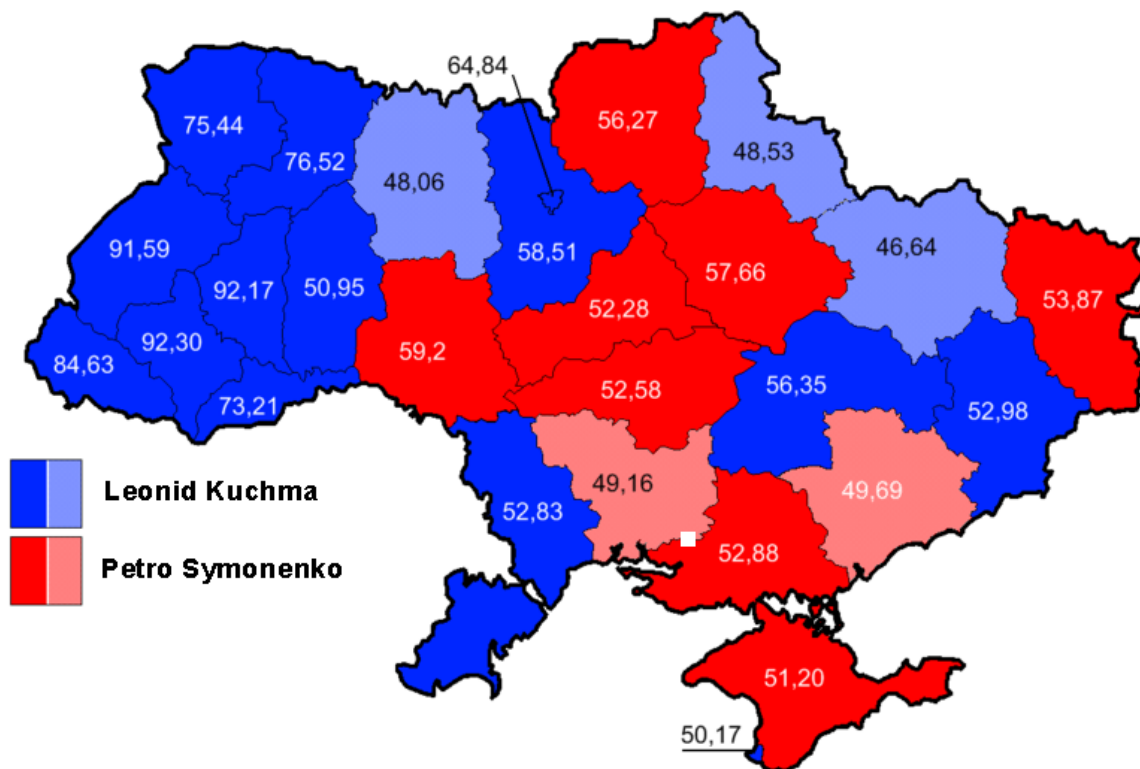
3.4 The 1999 Presidential Elections

By the time Kuchma faced reelection in 1999, his domestic political base had shifted from the eastern to the western regions of Ukraine. In the western oblasts of Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk, where he in 1994 had gained less than 10% of the votes, he now sensationally captured over 90% (Central Election Commission 2000). To this should be added that Kuchma's opponent five years earlier, Leonid Kravchuk, who in 1994 had accused Kuchma of being a "dangerous Russophile", during the 1999 presidential campaign's second round openly supported his candidacy. Not only is this shift in Kuchma's support base sensational as such, it may also be a validating argument for Kolstø's hypothesis of a Ukrainianized President. For this reason I will briefly comment on these elections separately in this section.

Vote distribution 1994 Ukrainian presidential elections (Source: Wikipedia 2014a).



Vote distribution 1999 Ukrainian presidential elections (Source: Wikipedia 2014b).



As indicated, Kuchma did in fact adopt a more independent and pro-Western foreign policy than was anticipated from him when he first took office. He also came off as a lot less pro-Russian within the realm of language policy, as we saw in the previous section. It should therefore be reasonable to assume that the West-Ukrainian electorate indeed developed a greater confidence in Kuchma during his first term. Be that as it may, it nevertheless seems reasonable to argue that Kuchma on some level benefited from the fact that he was facing First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Petro Symonenko, in the elections' second round. Given the traditional aversion against communist ideology in the western regions of Ukraine, it may well have been the case that to those who still had qualms about Kuchma's intentions he nevertheless came off as the lesser of "two evils".

According to Wilson, the whole scenario was a set-up that would pit Kuchma against a non-existent "Red Scare", whereas his real enemies were in fact such politicians as Pavlo Lazarenko, Oleksandr Moroz, Yuliia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko (Wilson 2009: p.184). Wilson provides little evidence in support for this claim. However, the front page of *Fakty i Kommentarii* from the 12th of November (see page 48), two days before the elections headed into the second round, indicates that Wilson's theory may not be that far fetched. It should be nevertheless be noted that this tabloid newspaper, which is the most popular in Ukraine, is owned by Kuchma's son-in-law, oligarch Viktor Pinchuk (Matuszak 2012: p.36).

If Kuchma's electoral success in the western regions of Ukraine came about solely because he was preferred as the lesser of "two evils", it should be reasonable to assume that his support was significantly smaller during the first round for the benefit of other liberal candidates, namely head of the liberal Social Market Choice faction, Yevhen Marchuk. This was, however, not the case. I have already mentioned that Kuchma captured over 90% of the vote in the three western oblasts of Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk in the second round. Of great interest is the fact that the corresponding numbers for the first round were as high as 64.06%, 69.38% and 70.38% for the three oblasts respectively. The numbers for Marchuk, who out of the thirteen candidates came in second in all three oblasts, were as low as 18.46%, 14.56% and 10.65% respectively (Central Election Commission 2000). The fact that as many as seven out of ten voters in these western oblasts preferred Kuchma to the other twelve candidates in the first round, is in my view solid evidence for Kolstø's hypothesis.

Проголосуй обязательно! Твой голос может стать решающим!

№211(0542) ПЯТНИЦА

12 НОЯБРЯ 1999 ГОДА

ВСЕУКРАИНСКАЯ
ЕЖЕДНЕВНАЯ ГАЗЕТА
ИЗДАЕТСЯ С АВГУСТА 1997 ГОДА



ГЛАВНЫЙ
РЕДАКТОР
АЛЕКСАНДР ШВЕЦ

№1
В УКРАИНЕ

ФАКТЫ

И КОММЕНТАРИИ

1917—1991 → 1999—2073 ???

ОШИБКА НА ВЫБОРАХ МОЖЕТ ОБРЕЧЬ УКРАИНУ НА ОЧЕРЕДНЫЕ 74 ГОДА КОММУНИСТИЧЕСКОГО КОШМАРА

а это:

- ✓ концлагеря и психушки для инакомыслящих
- ✓ голодомор и карательные продовольственные отряды
- ✓ участие наших сыновей в «освободительных» войнах в Азии и Африке
- ✓ финансовая поддержка коммунистических и фашистских режимов в Европе и Африке
- ✓ дискриминация по принципу — владелец или невладелец партийного билета

- ✓ вечные дефициты и продуктовые пайки по праздникам:

1 кг гречки
1 банка шпрот
2 банки майонеза «Провансаль»
1 банка зеленого горошка
200 г сливочного масла
1 банка кофейного напитка «Львовский»

- ✓ партийная программа «Время» на всех каналах телевидения и многостраничные отчеты о партийных съездах и конференциях во всех газетах



*Наш паровоз вперед летит!
В коммуне — остановка!
Иного нет у нас пути!
В руках у нас — винтовка!*

Photo: Eirik Bergene

3.5 Summary

The fact that Leonid Kuchma changed his language of public communication from Russian to Ukrainian when he became President of Ukraine is often highlighted by commentators, and may at first glance come as surprising given his allegedly pro-Russian agenda. This chapter has shown, however, that there were in fact logical and pragmatic reasons behind the move. We have also seen that the switch probably came easy to Kuchma as he grew up in an *oblast* of Ukraine where the majority of the population spoke Ukrainian. What is of greater interest, however, is how Kuchma abandoned his election promise to grant Russian a status as a state language in Ukraine when the Constitution was adopted. It is also a great paradox that the "dangerous Russophile", as claimed by Leonid Kravchuk, not only followed up on Kravchuk's education policies, but also went *even further* than his predecessor in his efforts to Ukrainianize the country.

This appears to have been the case also within the realm of foreign policy, where Kuchma managed to exploit a souring of the Russia-NATO relations to his own advantage, and hence managed to strengthen Ukraine's ties with the West. Other initial steps towards westward integration were also taken under Kuchma, such as closer cooperation with the European Union. Although Kuchma's opponents were quick to criticize the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, which was signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Kuchma during his first term, the agreement was in fact important in the sense that it took Ukraine a step further in consolidating its independence.

The sum total of Kuchma's first term in office bears witness to a President who pursued significantly more pro-Ukrainian policies than what the 1994 presidential campaign had indicated. This was arguably a major contributing factor to the sensational shift in his support base from the eastern to the western regions when he was reelected in 1999. However, Kuchma's room for maneuver was significantly curtailed within all spheres of politics during his second term, much as a result of growing oligarchic influence. Although he seemingly continued on his pro-Western course in his foreign policies, his growing inability to follow up with necessary domestic reforms nevertheless derailed him from the path he was on. His attempts to regain control over the oligarchs, whom he himself had allowed to emerge, resulted in democratic regression and, in the end, even a Revolution.

4 Viktor Yanukovych

The election of Party of Regions leader Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovych as President of Ukraine in February 2010 brought to power in Ukraine the most neo-Soviet political leader since the USSR disintegrated (Kuzio 2011: p.221). This view is largely shared by David Buffa, who claims that Yanukovych's return to power "clearly signals a pro-Moscow tilt" (Buffa 2010: p. 611). The assertion of Yanukovych as a pro-Russian politician is even further underpinned by the fact that President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, openly supported his candidacy in the stand-off with Viktor Yushchenko in the 2004 Presidential election campaign. Putin, who visited Ukraine on the eve of the first and second rounds of the elections, congratulated Yanukovych on his victory on the 22nd November when only 90% of the votes had been counted, a day before the Central Election Commission announced the official results. This eagerness on the Kremlin's part to ensure the victory of "their" candidate indicates that there is some truth attached to the notion of Yanukovych as a typically pro-Russian politician, at least at that particular point in time.

As history unfolded, the victory of Yanukovych in the second round of the 2004 presidential elections would soon develop into a major personal defeat for him. Reports on massive corruption, voter intimidation and direct electoral fraud benefitting Yanukovych came in from all over the country. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in protest, demanding that the results from the original run-off were annulled. After several weeks of massive protests, the protesters finally gained acceptance for their demands when the Ukraine's Supreme Court on December 3rd ordered a revote. This revote was held on the 26th of December, and Viktor Yushchenko was elected President of Ukraine with 51.99% of the votes, as against Yanukovych's 44.20%.

The events that led up to, triggered and subsequently followed this political crisis, commonly referred to as the "Orange Revolution", fall beyond the scope of this paper and will therefore largely remain untouched. It is reasonable to assume, however, that this humiliating defeat on some level must have affected Yanukovych's relations with Russia and the West respectively, and it would therefore in my view be a mistake to ignore these important events when analyzing his approach to the nationality question as President.

During the election campaign leading up to his victory in February 2010, Yanukovych wisely presented himself as a moderate, democratic professional who could

unify a country increasingly divided over whether it should align with Russia or the West (Motyl 2010: p.126). He was a man of the people, he claimed, who would place the interests of citizens above his own in contrast to his opponent, the allegedly power-hungry Yulia Tymoshenko (ibid.). By analyzing his statements and actions, this chapter will examine whether or not Yanukovych has undergone any form of Ukrainization after he obtained political power on a national level.

4.1 Background

Yanukovych originates from the city of Donetsk in the industrial center of Eastern Ukraine, the Donbass region, and has been a political representative of "the Donetsk clan"¹² since the mid 1990s. As highlighted by Matuszak (2012: p.41), Yanukovych has throughout his political career been highly dependent on Donetsk oligarchs, first and foremost founder and President of System Capital Management (SCM), Rinat Akhmetov. Many of Yanukovych's business and political relations were developed towards the end of the millennium, when he was governor of the Donetsk oblast. The non-transparent nature of his business during this era, has led to repeated allegations of fraud and corruption against Yanukovych, who himself reportedly held stakes in fuel and property development firms at the time. The office of the Donetsk Oblast Prosecutor has also twice, in 2005 and 2006 respectively, charged him with fraud stemming from irregularities in the way his youth convictions¹³ twenty years earlier were expunged. On both occasions, however, the charges were dropped due to the lack of evidence.

Yanukovych's inner circle, most commonly referred to as "the Family", is a new phenomenon in Ukrainian business and politics. Although little reliable information on the structure and functions of "the Family" is available, it would be a mistake to ignore it, as it was believed to serve as a fundamental and underlying structure for Yanukovych's power base (ibid.: pp.40-43). It consisted not only of oligarchs and shadowy business relations, but also of loyal officials, politicians and, fittingly enough, close members of his own family, including his two sons Oleksandr and Viktor. Many of Yanukovych's appointees as

¹² The Donetsk clan is a business group based in the Donbass area, which is involved with metallurgy. The group is most commonly associated with oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, but it is also linked to a number of high-ranking politicians, such as the previous Head of the Presidential Administration, Andrey Klyuev (Matuszak 2012: p.14).

¹³ Yanukovich was on two occasions in his youth, in 1967 and 1970, sentenced to incarceration for robbery/assault and fraud respectively. In 1978 both convictions were annulled by the Donetsk regional court under questionable circumstances.

President can be directly linked to his sons and their business activities. These appointees included (but were not limited to) previous head of the State Tax Service, Oleksandr Klimenko, previous Minister of Internal Affairs, Vitaly Zakharchenko and previous Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, Serhiy Arbuzov¹⁴ (ibid.).

This frequent mixing of politics and business under Yanukovych indicates that his actions as President were not always derived from political conviction, but rather from the personal interests of himself and/or his allies. This should be taken into consideration when we look into his nationality policies, in particular as far as foreign policy is concerned.

Whereas Yanukovych presented himself as a unifying figure during the 2010 election campaign, Taras Kuzio has gone so far as to describe him as being "ideologically pro-Russian". Kuzio makes this allegation with reference to Yanukovych's statements between elections, his election campaign rhetoric and Party of Regions and his own candidate's election programs (Kuzio 2010). Analyzing the latter, one of several controversial political stances we will come across, contributing to this image of Yanukovych as a pro-Russian politician, is his stance on dual citizenship. This has been prohibited by law in Ukraine since October 1991.

Meeting with Russian journalists in Kiev in September 2004, just a month prior to the presidential elections, Yanukovych announced his intentions of legalizing the obtaining of a second citizenship (lenta.ru 2004). Although he emphasized that such a move would facilitate the return of many Ukrainian individuals residing abroad to their native homeland, the announcement was to a larger degree interpreted as an unpatriotic act, facilitating the obtaining of Russian citizenship for individuals among the Russian minority. Given the fact that Yanukovych at the time served as Prime Minister under President Kuchma, one can easily jump to the conclusion that the idea in fact originated from Kuchma himself. This was not the case, however, as Kuchma was quick to criticize the move. He denounced it as nothing but "pre-election promises" (Korrespondent 2004). He later repeated his disapproval in his memoirs:

"Many people may still believe that he [Yanukovych] did this on my instruction. No, this was his own personal decision, and I reacted very negatively to it" (Kuchma 2007).

During the same meeting Yanukovych also underlined that a possible accession into NATO, which had been promoted by Yushchenko, would have a negative impact on

¹⁴ All of these officials were removed from power as a direct result of the dramatic events that led to the ousting of the Yanukovych regime during the winter of 2013/14.

Ukraine's military-industrial complex. He also for the first time announced his intentions of upgrading the status of the Russian language to a second state language.

4.2 The language issue

Viktor Yanukovych is a native Russian speaker, and this has also been his language of preference in public utterances throughout most of his political career. As was the case with Kuchma, he too set out to learn Ukrainian better¹⁵ when he decided to run for President in the 2004 campaign, and he did communicate in the state language during most of his appearances in the public domain throughout his presidency. As I have already touched upon, however, there are a couple of perfectly logical explanations behind this linguistic U-turn. Firstly, the *Ukrainian Law on Presidential Elections* explicitly names mastering the state language as a requirement to any eligible candidate. Secondly, as it over time has become customary that the President mainly speaks Ukrainian in the public domain, it seems like a rather small concession to make in order to maintain (or gain) popularity also within the Ukrainophone part of the population.

Taras Zahorodny has added to this that if a President of Ukraine is to violate this "unwritten law", and refuse to speak the state language in the public domain, this would subsequently contribute to his delegitimization. In such a case he would in the eyes of the Ukrainophones be seen as a President *only* for the Russian-speaking part of the population (Zahorodny 2014, author's interview). Zahorodny, in other words, supports the claim that Kuchma and Yanukovych both switched to the Ukrainian language for strictly pragmatic reasons. Director at the Centre for Political Studies "Penta", Volodymyr Fesenko, concurs:

"Both Kuchma and Yanukovych switched to the Ukrainian language and thereby underlined that they held the position as President of Ukraine [emphasis on Ukraine]. I believe this was connected with a subconscious understanding of how the President of Ukraine, at the very least on the surface, has to be a true Ukrainian. [...] They realized that if they were to come off as pro-Russian, they would under no circumstances be perceived as independent Presidents, and they both sought to be masters of their country. This was in their personal interests" (Fesenko 2014, author's interview).

¹⁵ Moser has made a point of how Yanukovych actively started working on his image after the Orange Revolution. In this process Yanukovych started working closely with Paul Manafort, a former adviser to U.S. Presidential Candidate John McCain. Henceforth, he increasingly spoke Ukrainian along with Russian in public (Moser 2013: p.90).

Much has been written and said about Yanukovych's literacy in Ukrainian, and emphasis is often put on his many shortcomings in this language. The brief 90-word autobiographical note he had to fill in for the Central Election Commission in 2004 contained as many as 12 spelling errors, including his own title, which he spelled "профѣсор" (the correct spelling being "професор"). Yanukovych has also been known to make numerous mistakes in Ukrainian during public performances, many of which have turned into popular jokes among those who enjoy making fun of him¹⁶. Nevertheless, Moser stresses that Yanukovych deserves credit for the fact that he has made a "considerable effort to speak better Ukrainian in light of his numerous fellow party members who have not" (Moser 2013: p.104).

It appears as if Yanukovych indeed took the task of learning the Ukrainian language very seriously, and the question, then, remains how this affected his approach to the language issue in Ukraine. In particular, this concerned education policies and the issue of the Russian language status, which he had promised to upgrade. In other words: Was the fact that Yanukovych switched to increasingly using the Ukrainian language a piece in a larger puzzle of Ukrainization, or was it nothing but a pragmatic step to silence his critics so that he could pursue the pro-Russian policies, with which he is so often associated? I will in the following analyze Yanukovych's approach to the language issue by looking into the policies he pursued, namely within the sphere of education, and also his handling of the question of the Russian language status.

As we have already seen, much of the Ukrainization policy of the Kravchuk years was consolidated under Leonid Kuchma. Viktor Yushchenko, in turn, speeded up this process by actively promoting the Ukrainian language, culture, and identity in schools, government, and the media, alienating many of the ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the process (Motyl 2010: p.129). The number of schools and pre-schools using Ukrainian as their language of instruction had by the end of the Yushchenko era risen to 82% (from 70% in 2000) and 86% (from 76% in 2000) respectively, exceeding not only the percentage of people declaring it native language but also that of the eponymous ethnic group (Kulyk 2013: p.284). In light of this it should be safe to classify Ukraine, at the time when Yanukovych took office, as a *nationalizing state* in the Brubaker terminology. Not

¹⁶ In late May 2012 Yanukovych in conjunction with the EURO Soccer Championship declared: "We generally think that we need to make our state dangerous for the lives of our citizens, and even more so when guests come to us" (Moser 2013: p.104). In another famous incident Yanukovych during a press conference in December 2010 forgot the Ukrainian word for "Christmas tree". Only after a 10 second pause for reflection did he finish his sentence - in Russian!

only was the nationalizing efforts at this point an avowed and expressly articulated "position" of the state, it was also very much *perceived* as such by both the Russian minority and their external national homeland, to which I shall return more thoroughly in chapter 5.

For the Russian-speaking part of the population it was, needless to say, warmly welcomed when Yanukovych in his election programme proclaimed his intentions of bolstering the Russian language by making it the second state language in Ukraine:

"Жажду реального утверждения в Украине европейских стандартов демократии, неуклонного обеспечения прав и свобод человека. Выступаю за придание русскому языку статуса второго государственного. Я - последовательный сторонник цивилизованного решения этого вопроса, осуществления сбалансированной государственной языковой политики, которая адекватно реагирует на языковые потребности общества, соответствует общепризнанным нормам международного права, Европейской хартии региональных языков или языков меньшинств." (Yanukovych 2009).

His announcement came as a direct response to Prime Minister and future opponent in the upcoming presidential campaign Yulia Tymoshenko's statement a month earlier. During a visit to the city of Lviv she had made it clear that:

"[...]as long as we are in power, as long as Ukraine is led by real patriots [...], we will allow no one to even raise the question of introducing any other state language. It will be Ukrainian, and Ukrainian only, under any given circumstances" (Tymoshenko, cited by UNIAN 2009).

When Viktor Yanukovych was elected President of Ukraine on February 7th 2010, the scene was, however, set for a scenario strikingly similar to that of the early Kuchma years as far as the language issue was concerned. As was the case with Leonid Kuchma, Yanukovych, also a Russophone and allegedly pro-Russian politician, had promised during his campaign to upgrade the status of the Russian language to a second state language. As we have already seen, Kuchma failed to do so during his presidency, leaving much of the Russophone electorate disappointed. Would Yanukovych follow suit?

The first indication that Yanukovych did in fact *not* intend to follow up on his promise to grant Russian the status of second state language, became evident already during the presidential campaign. In December 2009, two months prior to the elections, Yanukovych drastically changed his tone. Whereas he until then unmistakably had promised an upgrade of the Russian language to second official in Ukraine through amendments to the Constitution, he did at this point start to talk about "a series of laws" that would make the lives of the non-Ukrainian-speaking population of Ukraine "comfortable" (Moser 2013: p.106). Yanukovych stressed that these draft laws were already prepared, and that he would

sign them once he was elected President and the laws had been pushed through the Rada. Although he continued to be conspicuously vague on the issue for the remainder of his campaign, it was nevertheless evident that it was no longer his intention to make Russian a second state language in Ukraine.

At a joint press conference with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Yanukovych on the 5th of March 2010 gave his thoughts on the language issue for the first time after he took office as President of Ukraine. Whereas he during his campaign, at least during the beginning of it, repeatedly and unmistakably had spoken of an upgrade of the Russian language status to second official, he was now mainly concerned with securing the rights of minorities. In his response to the journalists he made no mentioning of an upgrade of the Russian language status, but instead once again stressed the importance of "facilitating comfortable living conditions for all nationalities residing on the territory of Ukraine", adding that mandatory steps would be taken to "secure the rights" of the Russian-speaking population in accordance with the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Yanukovych 2010b). Four days later, on the 9th of March, he finally made it unmistakably clear that:

"The Ukrainian language will develop in Ukraine as the sole state language" (Yanukovych, cited by Interfax 2010).

Yanukovych made this statement less than two weeks after he was inaugurated as President of Ukraine. The question, then, remains whether this scrapping of his initial election promise came as a result of Ukrainization in accordance with the Kolstø hypothesis, or if there were other driving forces behind the decision. This question is particularly interesting considering the fact that Kuchma did the same thing in 1994. Taras Zahorodny provided the following thoughts on this issue:

"The promise of establishing the Russian language as a second state language in Ukraine was never anything but a purely populist stance with no root in reality. More than anything, it served as a distraction from what was really important, namely the economic situation in the country. The Ukrainian and Russian languages have coexisted peacefully throughout the entire post-Soviet era, and the question of the Russian language status is de facto not an issue in everyday life " (Zahorodny 2014, author's interview).

Zahorodny then suggests that the language issue in Ukraine has become excessively politicized. Interestingly Yanukovych himself shared this view. In an interview with the Ukrainian newspaper Kommersant Ukraina in December 2009 declared that: "This question is too politicized, people often fail to understand the essence of the problem" (Moser 2013:

p.106). It should be noted, however, that Yanukovych made this comment shortly after he significantly changed his rhetoric on the issue during the presidential campaign, and it should accordingly be interpreted in light of this.

Another point made by Zahorodny in this connection, is how the upgrade of the Russian language status to second state language in Ukraine is a very powerful tool on a *rhetorical* level. An actual implementation of this, however, would according to Zahorodny have limited practical effect, and would only bring about "enormous implementation costs and bureaucratization". This is probably an important part of the reason why any politician promoting pro-Russian policies in fact seem to prefer to hang on to this playing card for as long as possible without actually having to go all the way. After all, once the upgrade materializes the politician promoting it can no longer benefit from the sentiments in society that call for such a move. The bottom line, according to Zahorodny, is therefore that the *promise* of an upgrade ironically is much more powerful than the upgrade itself (Zahorodny 2014, author's interview).

Professor of Philosophy and Senior Researcher at "Spirit and Letter" Publishing House, Aleksey Panych, agrees. According to him, "Yanukovych had too few trump cards on his hand to play this particular one before the 2015 Presidential elections" (Panych 2014, author's interview). With this statement Panych more than implies that the issue of the Russian language status in Ukraine with high probability once again would have been raised in the 2015 presidential race, had Yanukovych managed to stay in power that long. Such predictions, needless to say, are in their nature speculative, and should accordingly be treated with caution. It is nevertheless an interesting thought considering how Kuchma, at least partially due to his language policies, had lost much of his support in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine when he faced re-election in 1999.

Dmitry Dzangirov also aligned himself with these claims promoted by Zahorodny and Panych. He stressed how the life of an average Ukrainian citizen *de facto* would remain largely unaffected by an upgrade of Russian to a status as a second state language, regardless of their region of residence. Hence, Dzangirov claims, it makes little sense that the language issue continues to overshadow more profound problems in Ukrainian society whenever elections are taking place:

"Time and again we see how the language issue is put on the agenda prior to major elections in Ukraine, and those who will not play along with this are certain to lose. Now why is this happening? It's really very simple: Ordinary people have a hard time understanding complex programs of

economic, social or tax reforms. For this reason, the candidates, whoever they may be, need to come up with markers that distinguish themselves from the others. Such markers can be the language issue, NATO, the Customs Union, Russia and Brussels" (Dzangirov 2014, authors interview).

This "tendency" by my interviewees to dismiss the language issue as a *real* issue in Ukrainian politics, however, is not shared by Senior Lecturer in the Comparative Social Sciences at the University of London, Jan Germen Janmaat. Confronted with this claim he strongly warned me in an e-mail "not to be fooled by what people in Kiev tell you", in turn stressing that, in his view, "the language issue is very real" (Janmaat 2014, e-mail to author). According to Janmaat, the Ukrainian vote would not have been as split along regional-linguistic lines, and the politicians would have ignored it, if the voters didn't feel the language problem to be an issue.

Even if Yanukovych's scrapping of his own promise to upgrade the status of the Russian language to a second state language in Ukraine had striking similarities to the course of events during Kuchma's first term, it is nevertheless a fact that he went further than Kuchma in bolstering the use of Russian in Ukraine. Although he did not follow up on his promise as outlined in his election programme, his victory nevertheless had an instant effect on the language issue across the country. His proclaimed intentions of "securing the rights" of the Russian-speaking population inspired a new wave of proclamations of Russian as regional language in the east and south (Kulyk 2013: p.284). Such proclamations, however, had limited practical effect at the time since the Ukrainian legislation did not yet allow for any language to obtain a legal status as "regional". The compromise solution for Yanukovych became to bolster the right to use of Russian and other minority languages more extensively in areas where the number of users of any minority language exceeded a certain amount of the population. I shall return to this below.

Another domain in which the election of Yanukovych would have an instant effect was education. As we have seen, the number of Ukrainian-language schools and pre-schools was increasing steadily under all of Yanukovych's three predecessors. This happened, however, much due to the rapid pace of implementation in the western and central parts of Ukraine, where authorities, as well as residents, were largely supportive of the change. In the east and south, however, the reluctance of the population was significant, and was also fed by negative politicians and bureaucrats (ibid.).

A large portion of the Russian-speaking part of the population welcomed Yanukovych's appointment for Minister of Education and Science; his longtime ally Dmytro

Tabachnyk, who twice had served as his Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time it caused equally much concern among Ukraine's Ukrainophones. Tabachnyk has, as we shall see, been known to promote clearly anti-Ukrainian views in favor of more pro-Russian stances. There are many examples of this, but the perhaps most grave was put forward in his article *Oriental Lux* from 2009:

"There can be no doubt about the Russianness of contemporary Ukrainians. One can only doubt the Russianness of Galicians, but in this regard one can doubt their Ukrainianness as well. Actually, the Galicians geographically, confessionally, and mentally belong, rather, to Western Slavdom, and their short-term lingering in the realm of Kyivan Rus' should be merely regarded as an annoying historical coincidence. [...] Today we have to choose between two paths - the reestablishment of East Slavic, Russian, unity or the gradual assimilation into the Roman-German world and the transformation into Galicians" (Tabachnyk 2009).

Tabachnyk has not been selected as a unit of analysis for this thesis. However, as he according to Panych "*de facto* was put in charge of the Yanukovych regime's nationality policies"¹⁷ (Panych 2014, author's interview), he simply cannot be ignored. It should in this connection be noted that Tabachnyk not only served as Ukraine's Minister of Education and Science; he was simultaneously appointed Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for Humanitarian Issues. The appointment of such a controversial figure to these key positions as far as the nationality question is concerned can tell us something about Yanukovych's understanding of (or in Panych's words the lack of such) the sensitive nationality issue in Ukraine. I will therefore go into some detail on Tabachnyk's political record and many controversial statements below¹⁸.

Motyl has also pointed to the controversy attached to the appointment of Tabachnyk. According to him, Tabachnyk, who also served as Head of Kuchma's Presidential Administration from July 1994-December 1996, spearheaded what he refers to as "an attack on Ukrainian heritage":

"Tabachnyk is an odious choice because, besides having a weak academic pedigree, he openly espouses anti-Ukrainian views. He claims that the ethnic Ukrainians in the west of the country are too westernized to be true Ukrainians. He believes that Ukrainian culture flourished in Soviet times, when it was in fact suppressed in favor of the colonial power's culture. He also insists that today the Russian language is discriminated against, even as Russian-language publications and broadcasts make up the overwhelming majority of media available in Ukraine" (Motyl 2010: p.129).

¹⁷ According to Panych, Yanukovych had no real interest in the nationality question.

¹⁸ For a thorough review of Tabachnyk's many controversial and often clearly anti-Ukrainian statements, see Moser 2013: pp. 211-246.

Tabachnyk's "attack" took different forms. Reducing the role of Ukrainian in schools and urging the cessation of Ukrainian-language dubbing of foreign films are two specific examples (ibid.). Only two weeks after being appointed to the post of Minister of Education and Science he abolished the tests in Ukrainian for undergraduates. In July the same year he also cancelled formerly mandatory Ukrainian language tests for graduate students as well as the study of Ukrainian during Ph.D. studies (Moser 2013: p.218).

Furthermore, in April 2010 Tabachnyk signed a decree, which allowed institutions of higher education in Ukraine to teach foreign students in *any* language, first and foremost in Russian or English. This move was a revocation of policies pursued by the Yushchenko regime, which allowed Ukrainian institutions of higher education to teach foreign students in Ukrainian only. This, according to Tabachnyk, had resulted in a massive reduction of foreign students seeking to study in Ukraine, as they now preferred to enter Asian and Arabic universities (Unian 2010).

The list of controversial and, in the eyes of Western Ukrainians, anti-Ukrainian moves by Tabachnyk within the sphere of education is long. The policies pursued by him subsequently led to a number of allegations against him and calls for his resignation from various quarters¹⁹. The fiercest outcries, not surprisingly, came from the western parts of Ukraine. In February 2012 the three Executives from the oblasts of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil and Lviv in a joint statement demanded the immediate resignation of the "Ukrainophobe" Dmytro Tabachnyk:

"Министерство образования, науки, молодежи и спорта во главе с Табачником стало эпицентром реализации стратегии уничтожения украинской идеи в важнейшей общественной сфере - образовательной. [...] Своими антиукраинскими высказываниями и поступками Табачник окончательно дискредитировал себя, потому что противопоставил собственные корыстные интересы мнению абсолютного большинства населения Украины" (comments.ua 2012).

Tabachnyk on his part continued to illustrate why he was considered such a controversial choice for the posts of Minister of Education and Science, and Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for Humanitarian Issues, in a country as linguistically divided as Ukraine. On the 11th of June 2012 he made the following statement:

¹⁹ On "Knowledge Day" 2011 (2 September), protesters on the streets of Kiev, Donetsk, Lviv, Lutsk, Drohobych, Cherkasy, Vinnytsia, and Ostrih criticized that the Minister's reforms had limited the rights of students and institutions of higher learning, led to the commercialization of education, reduced the requirements for academic titles, and fostered the development of corruption in the educational sphere (kriminal.tv 2011).

"Если говорить о том, что сделала демократизация, то перестали навязывать регионам учебники на ненужном языке. Бюджет задыхается, я видел апокалиптическое мрачное зрелище" (Tabachnyk, cited by Ukrainskaya Pravda 2012).

A major difference in the nationality policies pursued by Kuchma and Yanukovych respectively is evident based on the above discussion. Whereas Kuchma's appointee as Minister of Education and Science, Michael Zgurovsky, went to great lengths to follow up on the Ukrainization policies introduced by his predecessor, Yanukovych's appointee for the same post did the exact opposite; he consistently downplayed the role of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine. In my view, the appointment of Tabachnyk to key positions serves as evidence against Kolstø's hypothesis. Firstly, it seems reasonable to assume that a Ukrainianized President would have been much more responsive to the Ukrainian-speaking part of the population when delegating such delicate portfolios. Secondly, Tabachnyk, although born and raised in Kiev, would in theory have been subject to the same Ukrainization as Yanukovych. This was clearly not the case.

4.2.1 The Law On Principles of the State Language Policy

"For each of the regional or minority languages specified in the second paragraph of this Article, measures will be taken to increase their use, as stipulated in this Law, provided that the number of regional language speakers residing in the territory in which that language is common, constitutes 10 percent or more of its population size" (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy Web-Portal 2012).

This citation constitutes the very essence of the *Law On Principles of the State Language Policy*, which was signed into force by Yanukovych on the 8th of August 2012²⁰. While its supporters would claim that this was merely a *formalization* of the language situation in regions where minority languages (in particular Russian) were already used in all spheres of society, its opponents would have it that its real intention was more profound. In particular, the Department of Ethnopolitics at the Institute for Political and Ethno-national Research of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences claimed in an expert review of the draft in 2011 that the 10% threshold primarily was aimed at protecting Russian, whereas those languages which were in an *actual need* of protection barely were taken into consideration (nbb.com 2011). They were joined by front line reporter for The Economist, Tim Judah, who argued that the law's real intention, although "dressed up as protection for

²⁰ All of the law's authors were members of Yanukovych's support party, the Party of Regions.

minority languages", was in fact to bolster the use of Russian. He added to this that it could be interpreted as a first step in upgrading it to a status of second state language (Judah 2012).

Although hardly the only reason, this was with probability one major contributing factor to why the right-wing nationalists of the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" made an unprecedented breakthrough to the Ukrainian Parliament only two months later, securing 10.44% of the votes (Bergene 2013: p.16). The fact that the law was passed in August 2012, only two months prior to the parliamentary elections, once again shows us how the language issue is put on the top of the agenda prior to major elections in Ukraine.

The language law was not only criticized by typically pro-Ukrainian forces such as Svoboda, but also by scholars who felt that the changes brought about an unnecessary complication of the linguistic situation in the country. According to Kulyk, the "situation of the formal priority of Ukrainian and largely unconstrained use of both languages in actual communication, which existed until the adoption of the new language law in the summer of 2012, should have been preserved" (Kulyk 2013: p.302). One of his main objections to the law was that "many provisions of the law provide for the use of Russian on the entire territory of Ukraine, often instead (rather than alongside) of the formally superior titular language" (ibid.).

Another apparent problem with the law, allegedly designed for securing the rights of national minority languages in Ukraine *in line with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, was that its main beneficiary, the Russian language, "fails to meet the criteria of a regional or minority language as defined by the Charter" (Moser 2013: p.71). The original text of the Charter promotes the following definition of regional and minority languages:

"[...] 'regional or minority languages' means languages that are: i) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and ii) different from the official language(s) of that State;" (Council of Europe 1992).

This has led Moser to argue that:

"As the focus of the Charter is obviously on actual language usage and not on ethno-national criteria, it is clear that according to the Charter, Russian in Ukraine does not mean the language of the Russian national minority in the country, but Russian as used in Ukraine. Since the Russian language is used not only as a primary language by most Russians - as well as by many Ukrainians and many representatives of other minorities of Ukraine - but also on a very broad scale as a second (or perhaps even third) language by many Ukrainians and representatives of national minorities, it

remains a mystery why Russian was ever even acknowledged as a regional or minority language in Ukraine" (Moser 2013: p.75).

Based on the understanding of the Russian language in Ukraine not as a language of the Russian minority, but as a language *used*, to a greater or lesser extent, by a *majority* of the Ukrainian population, we are more able to understand the law's critics. A 2008 survey demonstrated that 40.3% of the respondents spoke only Russian or primarily Russian in everyday communication, compared to only 35.3% who spoke only Ukrainian or primarily Ukrainian (Moser 2013: p.49). According to a poll conducted by the Razumkov Centre, as much as 94.1% of the Ukrainian population knows the Russian language, whereas the corresponding number for Ukrainian was 91% (Razumkov Centre, unknown year). Based on this, we are in fact faced with the great paradox that the state language in Ukraine is "smaller" than Russian as far as the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* is concerned. Hence can Ukrainian be said to be more in need of protection than Russian.

4.3 Foreign policy

Based on his election program submitted to the Central Election Commission of Ukraine in October 2009, Yanukovych can be said to have taken neither a strictly pro-Russian nor a pro-Western approach to the issue of foreign policy during his campaign. In fact, he mentioned the preservation of Ukraine's status as a *non-bloc* country as his number one priority. Although he was conspicuously vague on how he planned to achieve this aim, the document basically gave the impression that Yanukovych wanted to improve relations with everybody:

"Восстановлю дружеские и взаимовыгодные отношения с Российской Федерацией, странами СНГ, обеспечу стратегическое партнерство с США, ЕС, странами "большой двадцатки".
(Yanukovych 2009).

Yanukovych continued to repeat this message during his campaign, and in doing so he implied that he would take a multi-vector approach to foreign policy. As we have seen, Kuchma had been largely successful in his balancing act between the East and the West. Succeeding the overtly pro-Western "Orange" regime, it was evident that Yanukovych was hoping for success similar to that of Leonid Kuchma by improving relations with Russia. This, however, should be carried out without a simultaneous deterioration of relations with

the West. During a meeting with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in Kiev in July 2009, Yanukovych explained why he, as President of Ukraine, would pursue a *non-bloc* policy:

"Статус 'внеблочности', мистер Байден, предполагает возможность маневра. С одной стороны, сохраняется евроинтеграционный вектор. С другой - весьма обеспокоенная Россия: перспективой увидеть воинские контингенты и ракеты НАТО в шестистах километрах от Москвы. Ведь Россия - наш ближайший сосед, а здравый смысл диктует логику выстраивания взаимоотношений" (Yanukovych, cited by Cherednychenko 2013: pp.123-124).

Once Yanukovych had taken office, observers and the media were quick to place great emphasis on the fact that Yanukovych conducted his first visit abroad as President to Brussels, and not Moscow (European Voice 2010, Institute of World Policy 2010). Yanukovych himself, however, dismissed this as purely coincidental. Dmitry Dzangirov, who is a personal acquaintance of Yanukovych and was travelling with him on this trip as a journalist, dismissed this "coincidence", and stressed how such first visits are always loaded with symbolism. He also emphasized Yanukovych's desire for recognition by Western leaders and to improve his image in the West:

"Yanukovych had a strong desire to become a member of the 'Western club'. Trivial as it may seem, this was why the 2012 European Championship became such a prestigious project for him. I believe he saw this as an opportunity to prove something to the West". (Dzangirov 2014, author's interview).

During the mentioned maiden trip abroad to Brussels, Yanukovych made it clear that: "We will take the mandatory steps to continue our Euro-integrational course" (Yanukovych 2010a), as he gave his first official interview as President. The fact that Yanukovych conducted his maiden trip to Brussels and confirmed his intentions of continued integration of Ukraine into European structures, indicated that he was leaning westwards in his approach to foreign policy. Nevertheless, he almost immediately sent out mixed signals as he only four days later, during his first visit as President to Moscow, announced that he would perform a "sharp U-turn" on the policies towards Russia pursued by his predecessor Viktor Yushchenko, whose pro-Western and pro-NATO policies had infuriated the Kremlin (The Guardian 2010).

Yanukovych's ambitions for preserving Ukraine's status as a *non-bloc* country was an outspoken promise during the election campaign, and his rejection of Ukrainian membership in NATO as President therefore hardly came as a surprise. His great mistake, however, according to an expert panel surveyed by the Institute of World Policy in 2010, was to fix this status by law. According to the panel, this move was unnecessary. As it was clear that Yanukovych had no intention of integrating Ukraine into NATO anyway, the

additional measure in form of the *Law On Bases of Domestic and Foreign Policy* simply put "too many nails in the coffin of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration", one respondent would have it (Institute of World Policy 2010). Combined with the extension of the lease of Russia's Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol, to which I shall return, this move increased the strategic risks of Ukraine. There were also no warranties, the survey concluded, that the Russian party would not behave in a similar way in Ukraine as it did in Georgia in 2008 (ibid.)

Although Yanukovych was quick to dismiss Ukrainian membership in NATO (Yanukovych 2010a), he proved equally reluctant to joining the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)²¹, as he in Kiev in May 2010 declined a proposal from Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to join the military alliance. On a press conference following the meeting between the two Presidents, Yanukovych made it clear that:

"Украина проводит внеблоковую политику с целью недопущения новых разделительных линий на Европейском континенте, укрепления и расширения общего европейского пространства развития. Наша задача – наработать новые механизмы взаимодействия в области безопасности со странами – членами оборонных союзов, внеблоковыми странами и странами с нейтральным статусом. Этот алгоритм может стать основой для создания модернизированной архитектуры единой и неделимой системы безопасности в Евроатлантике." (Yanukovych 2010c).

These remarks by Yanukovych indicated that he would pursue a pragmatic foreign policy, seeking to strengthen ties with both Russia and the West simultaneously, much in line with his own election programme, and not dissimilar to the policies pursued by Leonid Kuchma. This was even further underpinned as he minutes later put emphasis on Ukraine's ambitions for negotiating and subsequently signing an association agreement with the European Union. He did, however, underline that Ukraine and Russia had finally "returned to the format of strategic partnership" (ibid.).

As we shall see, this balancing act between the East and the West was in many ways to become symptomatic for the Yanukovych regime. Whereas Ukraine's Euro-integrational course continued to lie as a foundation in Yanukovych's foreign policy throughout most of his reign, he seemingly compensated for this by making several individual concessions to Russia and the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine.

²¹ The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is an intergovernmental military alliance signed on the 15th of May 1992. Its current members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

The first, and possibly also the largest of these, came just a month and a half into his presidency as Yanukovych on the 21st of April 2010, through the *Russian Ukrainian Naval Base for Gas Treaty*²², prolonged the lease for Russia's Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol with 25 years until the year 2042. In return Russia agreed to lower the price Ukraine pays for natural gas by 30% through 2019. I will in the following go into some detail on the circumstances surrounding the conclusion of this agreement. Not only was the event very important as such for the involved parties, it arguably also had implications for Yanukovych's subsequent approach to foreign policy, to which I shall return.

The signing of the agreement commonly referred to as the *Kharkiv Accords* followed a period of intensified dialogue between Ukraine and Russia. The two Presidents Medvedev and Yanukovych met no fewer than five times during Yanukovych's first month and a half in office (Cherdenichenko 2013: p.156). The main features of the agreement are rendered below:

"Стороны продлевают действие Соглашения между Украиной и Российской Федерацией о статусе и условиях пребывания Черноморского флота Российской Федерации на территории Украины от 28 мая 1997 года [...] на 25 лет с 28 мая 2017 года с последующим автоматическим продлением на последующие пятилетние периоды, если ни одна из Сторон не уведомит письменно другую Сторону о прекращении их действий не позднее, чем за один год до истечения срока действия"

[...]

"при цене триста тридцать три доллара США и выше за тысячу кубометров газа снижение составит сто долларов США, при цене ниже трехсот тридцати трех долларов США снижение составит 30% от такой цены" (Zhitomir.info 2010).

Given the sensitivity of the Black Sea Fleet question in Ukrainian politics, it came as no surprise that the signing of this Russian-Ukrainian agreement caused fierce outcries amongst Yanukovych's Europe-oriented critics. According to them, Yanukovych was through the agreement selling out Ukraine's national interests. Leader of the Front for Change Party and previous Minister of Foreign Affairs and Economy, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, urged all oppositional forces to unite to "protect national interests" after the signing of what he referred to as an "unconstitutional agreement" (Korrespondent 2010). Yanukovych for his part argued that the agreement very much was in the national interests of Ukraine, and that

²² The *Russian Ukrainian Naval Base for Gas Treaty*, commonly referred to as the *Kharkiv Accords*, was signed on the 21st of April 2010 in Kharkiv by Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev.

signing it was not only a necessity, but also a matter of "state survival" (Ukrainskaya pravda 2010). At a press conference following the signing of the agreement, Yanukovych stressed that Ukraine, as a result of the 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute²³, paid the highest prices for gas in all of Europe. For this reason, reducing the prices Ukraine paid Russia for gas was Yanukovych's number one priority in his efforts to resolve the serious economic crisis Ukraine found itself in (ibid.).

The conclusion of the *Russian Ukrainian Naval Base for Gas Treaty* marked the first significant turning point in the Ukrainian-Russian rapprochement (Moser 2013: p.93), which was also underlined by Yanukovych during the press conference following the signing of the agreement:

"Хочу сказать, что если каждая из наших встреч, Дмитрий Анатольевич, будет заканчиваться такими решениями, я думаю, что мы очень скоро компенсируем тот период времени, можно сказать, прохладных отношений между Украиной и Россией. И этот новый этап, конечно, будет способствовать развитию наших экономик, развитию традиционных отношений между украинским и русским народами" (Yanukovych 2010d).

Yanukovych's efforts to improve relations with Russia hardly came as a surprise as this had been an outspoken promise of his during his campaign. What came more as a shock to Ukraine watchers, however, was the radicalism of Yanukovych's rupture with the central tenets of Ukraine's previous foreign policy (Copsey & Shapovalova 2010: p.3). Copsey and Shapovalova have noted that there had been no public debate prior to the signing, independent media were excluded from the ceremony of signing and the subsequent press conference, and street protests by the opposition were suppressed (ibid.). In the already mentioned expert poll conducted by the Institute of World Policy in 2010, the respondents highlighted the speed with which Yanukovych sought to improve relations with Russia as one of the major mistakes in his foreign policies. According to the survey, this urgency of "making things right" with Russia left the impression that Yanukovych was giving in to pressure from the Kremlin. Against this background any talk of neutrality and multi-vector policies would have little credibility (Institute of World Policy 2010).

What was to make matters even worse was the way the agreement was pushed through the Rada without regard for transparency or democratic procedure only five days

²³ The 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute was a pricing dispute over the price Ukraine was to pay for Russian gas which ultimately resulted in Russia cutting off its gas supply to Ukraine for 13 days. The dispute was later resolved through the negotiation by the two countries' Prime Ministers, Vladimir Putin and Yulia Tymoshenko, of a new contract which covered the next 10 years. Tymoshenko was in October 2011 sentenced to seven years in prison for abuse of office because she had concluded this deal.

later. As pointed out by Motyl, there was no expert evaluation of the draft and no proper consideration of the issue in parliamentary committees. He has highlighted four separate issues that the Rada never had the opportunity to debate:

- 1) The geopolitical implications for Ukraine.
- 2) The fair rate that Russia should pay in rent for using the base.
- 3) The price Ukraine should pay for Russian gas.
- 4) The cost to Russia of transporting gas through Ukraine's pipelines (Motyl 2010: p.130).

The bill was nevertheless approved. Its ratification caused a mass brawl in the Verkhovna Rada, during which Parliamentary Speaker Volodymyr Rybak famously protected himself with an umbrella from the eggs thrown at him from the opposition. The question then remains: Which implications do the *Kharkiv Accords* have on the hypothesis of Kiev's alleged ukrainianizing influence on Yanukovich?

This question is seemingly hard to answer in absolute terms as there are conflicting views on whether or not the agreement served Ukraine's national interests. Whereas it seems reasonable to claim that the extension of Russia's lease of the Black Sea Fleet naval base did little to help Ukraine reduce its dependence on Russia, it is nevertheless true that Ukraine needed to act in order to solve its serious economic problems. Be that as it may, the *Kharkiv Accords* are today widely perceived as significantly more beneficial for the Russian party than for the Ukrainian²⁴. Panych argues that the agreement was a tactical maneuver from Yanukovich to collect "a quick success":

"Yanukovich needed a quick success. In this sense Yanukovich was no better than Tymoshenko; they both fell into the same trap. For the sake of a tactical domestic success, they played on Russia's strategic interests. The Kharkiv Accords, I would say, were in the tactical interests of Yanukovich, the strategic interests of Putin and in no ways in the interests of Ukraine" (Panych 2014, author's interview).

The expert panel surveyed by Institute of World Policy in 2010 made the same observation as Panych. According to them, the opportunity to buy gas at a less expensive rate was a tactical, rather than strategic, gain for Ukraine. The panel also pointed to the fact

²⁴ Following the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation in March 2014, President Vladimir Putin signed a law *On the Denouncement of the Agreements Regarding the Deployment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Ukrainian Territory* on April 2nd 2014.

that "after some time Russia might be forced to raise prices again anyway" (Institute of World Policy 2010), which was precisely what happened.

Another important factor which needs to be addressed when analyzing how beneficial the agreement was to Ukraine, is the big discrepancy between what it promised to do and what it in reality did. As we have seen, the agreement text clearly stated that Russia committed itself to reducing the price Ukraine paid for its gas by 30% through 2019. What actually happened, however, was that the prices Ukraine had to pay Russia for its gas imports continued to *increase* in the years following the conclusion of the agreement²⁵. This development has led scholars to argue that Yanukovich became increasingly skeptical to Moscow. As argued by Kuzio, "Yanukovich's 'Euro-pragmatism' was born out of personal frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin's disrespect for him and [...] Moscow's deceit over the April 2010 *Kharkiv Accords*" (Kuzio 2013). Vladimir Fesenko presented the very same argument during my interview with him:

"Yanukovich did not become a pro-Russian President, and funny as it may seem, the main reason for this were the Kharkiv Accords. This agreement created very high expectations on both sides, and these expectations did not materialize. Both sides were very disappointed with one another, and as a result a relatively tense situation emerged between the two countries" (Fesenko 2014, author's interview).

According to Kuzio and Fesenko, it was in the case of Yanukovich not first and foremost Kiev, but *Moscow* that exerted the ukrainianizing effect on him. If this is true, it largely confirms the Ukrainization-part of Kolstø's hypothesis. In my opinion, however, Kuzio and Fesenko go further than Kolstø in pointing to pressure from Moscow as an underlying driving force for Ukrainization. An interesting parallel can here be drawn to the U.S.-Russia relations in the early 2000s. Whereas President Putin went to great lengths to assist the United States in its "War on Terror" in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, little was done (in the eyes of the Kremlin) to retaliate this political goodwill shown by Russia. This, in turn, caused Putin to increasingly distance himself from the West. In light of this one can in fact argue that Washington exerted a Russifying effect on Putin. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that this image is not an either-or, and that both Kiev and Moscow (or rather the dynamics of the policies crafted in these cities) well may

²⁵ In June 2010, Ukraine was paying Gazprom around \$234 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas. Nevertheless, Ukrainian consumers experienced a 50% increase on household natural gas utility prices in July 2010 (a key demand of the International Monetary Fund in exchange for a \$15 billion loan). In August 2011, Ukraine paid Russia \$ 350 per 1,000 cubic meters; in November 2011 it paid \$400 per 1,000 cubic meters; in January 2013 Ukraine paid \$430 per 1,000 cubic meters (Wikipedia 2014c). According to Moser, Ukraine continued even after the signing of the Karhiv Accords to pay higher gas prices than most other countries, including Germany (Moser 203: p.93).

contribute to Ukrainization, and that this largely is happening within the framework of Brubaker's triadic nexus model.

With the extension of the Black Sea Fleet naval base lease to Russia so early in Yanukovych's presidency, Moscow with probability expected him to follow up with other concessions, such as the recognition of the *de facto* states South-Ossetia and Abkhazia. This, however, did not happen as Yanukovych made it perfectly clear that "international law applies to everybody with no exceptions" (Yanukovych 2010a). Furthermore, he also proved reluctant to pursue the inclusion of Ukraine into the Russia-led Customs Union with Kazakhstan and Belarus. Although he occasionally hinted that Ukraine might be "interested in such a move" (*ibid.*), he did little if anything for this to materialize, and focused instead on negotiating a Free Trade and Association Agreement with the European Union²⁶.

Today it is a widespread perception among scholars and observers that Yanukovych was largely unsuccessful in his attempts to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy. To this should be added that it was in fact a foreign policy issue that triggered the political crisis that ultimately led to his ousting in February 2014. For reasons highlighted in chapter 1, I will not go into detail on the circumstances surrounding the events that took place during the winter of 2013/14. However, Yanukovych's surprise decision during the third Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013 of scrapping the fully negotiated (by himself) Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, and instead to seek closer ties with Russia and the Customs Union, is directly relevant for the scope of this thesis. For this reason these events simply cannot be ignored. Does this move by Yanukovych provide a blow to the Kolstø hypothesis? Vladimir Fesenko provided his thoughts on why Yanukovych failed where Kuchma had been successful:

"Yanukovych found himself in a situation where a decision had to be made. The thing is that Ukraine under Yushchenko started negotiations about a free trade and association agreement with the European Union. At the same time Putin initiated a new integrational project, the Customs Union. As a result Yanukovych found himself caught in the middle. Moscow very persistently demanded a decision; either or. Yanukovych was forced to hurry. At the end of the day this led to the current political crisis" (Fesenko 2014, author's interview).

Fesenko's main point is that Yanukovych's maneuverability within the realm of foreign policy from the very beginning was considerably smaller than what was the case with Kuchma. A major contributing factor to this was the fact that Russia had grown

²⁶ It should be noted that Ukraine was granted an "observer" status in the Customs Union on the 31st of May 2013. It remains largely unclear, however, how this vague status will affect Ukraine in practical terms.

significantly stronger both politically and economically since the Kuchma days. Simultaneously the European Union was arguably weakened due to the Eurozone crisis. For this reason Russia was able to exert increased pressure on Ukraine when the time finally came to seal the deal. It is therefore hard to determine whether Yanukovych's controversial decision to scrap the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement was one of ideological conviction or a submission to extensive pressure. Sergey Datsyuk argued that it never was Yanukovych's intention to sign the agreement, and that:

"Yanukovych for a long time gave the impression that he was leaning towards Europe, but in reality he was oriented towards Russia. It was this schizophrenia that in the end sealed his fate" (Datsyuk, 2014, author's interview).

4.4 Summary

Much like Kuchma, Yanukovych changed his language of public communication from Russian to Ukrainian when he became President of Ukraine. He also discarded his promise of granting Russian a status as a second state language in the country. Behind these apparent similarities between Kuchma and Yanukovych, however, some differences have become evident in this chapter. Firstly, Yanukovych did in fact strengthen the position of Russian in Ukraine, as the *Law On Principles of the State Language Policy* in 2012 allowed for minority languages to obtain a status of "regional" in areas where the number of speakers of that language constitutes 10 percent or more of its total population. Secondly, whereas Kuchma's appointed Minister of Education and Science went to great lengths to follow up on the Ukrainization policies introduced by his predecessor, Yanukovych's odious choice of Dmytro Tabachnyk for this post sparked a wave of discontent from Ukraine's Ukrainophones. The largely anti-Ukrainian policies pursued by him, seemingly with Yanukovych's blessing, appear to weaken Kolstø's hypothesis of a Ukrainianized President.

Differences are also apparent within the realm of foreign policies. Whereas the *Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership* today is widely perceived as a necessary compromise document at a critical time for Ukraine's state formation, the *Kharkiv Accords* are by many depicted as a hasty agreement that contradicted the national interests of Ukraine. It has been argued in this chapter, however, that the failure on Russia's part to fulfill its obligations under the latter agreement in fact had a Ukrainianizing effect on Yanukovych. The political pressure a strengthened Russia increasingly exerted on Ukraine even further nourished this effect. The result was an intensified negotiation process between

Ukraine and the European Union on a Free Trade and Association Agreement, which continued to annoy Moscow until Yanukovich finally scrapped it in November 2013.

5 Expectations to and perceptions of nationality policies

In the previous two chapters I have discussed Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych's respective approaches to the nationality question in Ukraine with special emphasis on the language problem and foreign policy. Whereas their actions and proclamations may generate a fruitful basis for analyzing their nationality policies as such, this should in my view nevertheless be supplemented with some data concerning the various *perceptions* of their policies. Not least will it be relevant in order to determine whether or not post-Soviet Ukraine under the two Presidents can be classified as a *nationalizing state* in the Brubaker terminology. This, in turn, should tell us something about whether Kuchma and/or Yanukovych have undergone Ukrainization in line with Kolstø's hypothesis. As we have seen, the stances of the nationalizing state may be an avowed and expressly articulated "position" of a given state, but they don't in fact need to be avowed or articulated in order to be "real" (Brubaker 1996: p.63).

This chapter is devoted to the various perceptions of Kuchma and Yanukovych's nationality policies. I will put special emphasis on the reactions of the Russian minority in Ukraine and the Russian Federation as the national homeland to this minority. I shall in the following also include some data concerning some of the expectations to the two Presidents within the Ukrainian population at the time when they took office. In my view, this is a fruitful approach, as we will be better able to understand the various reactions to nationality policies when we know from which expectations they diverted from or were in line with.

5.1 Expectations to Kuchma and Yanukovych

Before we start identifying and analyzing the various perceptions of the allegedly pro-Russian Presidents' respective approaches to the nationality issue, let me first highlight some of the sentiments that were present in the Ukrainian population at the time when they took office. As I have already indicated, this will make us better able to understand why the Russophone and Ukrainophone parts of the population have reacted to the statements and actions of the two Presidents, as presented in the previous two chapters, the way they have.

Below I include two representative surveys conducted by KIIS (Kiev International Institute of Sociology), which address attitudes towards relations with Russia and the status

of the Russian language per ethno-linguistic group, and relations to Russia based on regional distribution. The surveys were conducted during the very onset of Kuchma's first term as President of Ukraine. I will not conduct a full analysis of these surveys as my main object in this thesis is to identify how various actors perceived the *actual* policies of Kuchma and Yanukovych. Nevertheless, I find it appropriate to highlight some of the below numbers to underline the big difference in attitudes among the two largest ethno-linguistic groups in Ukraine, and how these very different expectations subsequently have led to differences in perceptions.

Table 1:

ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND STATUS OF RUSSIAN PER ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUP (IN PERCENT)			
Desirable Relations with Russia	UUs*	RUs*	RRs*
Closed borders, visas, customs	24	5	1
Open borders, no visas, no customs	49	55	41
Ukraine and Russia must unite in one state	22	38	56
Don't know	5	2	1
TOTAL	100	100	100
Desirable Status of Russian Language			
Must be eliminated from official communication in all of Ukraine	28	4	1
Second official language only in sites where the majority desires so	40	37	27
Second state language of Ukraine	22	56	70
Don't know	9	3	2
TOTAL	100	100	100

* UUs =Ukrainophone Ukrainians, RUs = Russophone Ukrainians, RRs = Russophone Russians

Note: Column totals may not equal 100% as figures are rounded.

Source: Arel & Khmelko 1996. Survey conducted by Kiev Institute of Sociology, May-June 1994.

Table 2:

ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA IN THE TWO REGIONS OF UKRAINE (IN PERCENT)									
	West			East			Ukraine		
<i>Desirable Relations with Russia</i>	July 94	Dec 94	Mar 95	July 94	Dec 94	Mar 95	July 94	Dec 94	Mar 95
Closed borders, visas, customs	23	25	28	4	7	4	12	15	15
Open borders, no visas, no customs	55	53	53	46	46	45	50	49	48
Ukraine and Russia must unite in one state	18	19	16	49	44	48	36	34	34
Don't know	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Column totals may not equal 100% as figures are rounded.

Source: Arel & Khmelko 1996. Survey conducted by Kiev Institute of Sociology, July 1994-March 1995.

The by far largest discrepancies in attitudes found in these surveys concern the desirable status of the Russian language. Whereas an unsurprisingly low portion of the Russophone part of the population (RUs = 4%, RRs = 1%) desired to eliminate Russian from official communication in all of Ukraine, the corresponding number for the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians was as high as 28%. An even larger gap can be found in the attitudes towards the potential status of Russian as a second state language. Whereas as many as 70% of the RRs and 56% of the URs welcomed such an upgrade, the corresponding number for the UUs was a mere 22%.

Based on the above we understand why the language issue was of such high importance during the 1994 presidential campaign as Ukraine at that time was in the process of adopting its Constitution. Furthermore, it sheds light on the unprecedented Western Ukrainian support for Kuchma when he was reelected five years later. It is obvious that Kuchma's failure to upgrade Russian to a status as second state language was not in line with what the Russian-speaking part of the population expected him to do. This, in turn, nourished the perceptions of Kuchma as the pro-Ukrainian candidate in the 1999 elections. In my view, this serves as evidence in support of Kolstø's hypothesis of a ukrainianized President.

Significant differences can also be found in the attitudes towards relations with Russia. As many as 1 out of 4 UUs (24%) desired closed borders and a visa/customs regime

with the Russian Federation, while the corresponding number for the RRs was only 1%. It is also worth noting that as many as 56% of the RRs supported a full reintegration of Ukraine with Russia, while the corresponding number for the UUs was 22%. We see a quite similar tendency in the responses according to regional belonging (table 2) as 49% of the respondents in Eastern Ukraine supported reintegration, while only 18% in Western Ukraine was in favor of such a move in July 1994. This is unsurprising as the ethno-linguistic groups, as outlined in the surveys, largely correspond with the division of Ukraine into a western and an eastern region.

As we have seen, neither Kuchma nor Kravchuk had promoted an agenda of full reintegration of Ukraine with Russia during the 1994 presidential campaign. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that, although desired, such a move was hardly *expected* from Kuchma by his constituencies when he became President. What they undoubtedly expected, however, was for Kuchma to pursue closer relations with Russia and integration into post-Soviet structures such as the CIS. As we have seen, this was yet another issue on which Kuchma did not deliver in line with the outlined expectations to him by his own constituencies.

Let us briefly assess how the attitudes towards relations with Russia in Ukraine had changed by the time Viktor Yanukovych became President in 2010. KIIS conducted the same survey in March that year, shortly after Yanukovych took office:

Table 3:

ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA IN UKRAINE (IN PERCENT)	
Desirable Relations with Russia	Ukraine, March 2010
Closed borders, visas, customs	11
Open borders, no visas, no customs	67
Ukraine and Russia must unite in one state	19
Don't know	3
TOTAL	100

Source: Kiev International Institute of Sociology 2013.

When we compare these survey results with the corresponding numbers from July 1994 when Kuchma took office, one striking discrepancy becomes evident. Over the 16 years that had passed, the share of respondents that supported the unification of Ukraine and

Russia into one state had been halved as it dropped by 17 percentage points, from 36% to 19%. Correspondingly the share of respondents that desired open borders with no visas and customs had increased by 17 percentage points, from 50% to 67%. It would therefore seem that the pro-Russian sentiment in Ukraine had decreased significantly, or at least taken a less radical form. It appears that Ukraine had become less polarized on the nationality issue, and that Yanukovych accordingly in fact would have greater maneuverability than what was the case with Kuchma. Be that as it may, we have over the previous chapters seen how Kuchma largely succeeded, whereas Yanukovych's presidency culminated in the biggest political crisis in the history of independent Ukraine.

5.2 Reactions from the Russian minority in Ukraine

As we saw in the previous section, the attitudes towards the Russian language and the Russian Federation vary greatly along regional and ethnolinguistic lines in Ukraine. A too nationalist (or pro-Ukrainian) approach to these issues in the nation-building processes, could therefore easily alienate the large Russian minority. If Ukrainization efforts were to significantly undermine the rights and privileges of the Russians, such nationalization could by this minority be interpreted not as ukrainization, but rather as anti-Russianism.

Several of my interviewees stressed that this was exactly what happened during the Yushchenko years. Analyzing the "Orange" regime's approach to the nationality issue goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but this once again underlines the delicacy of the issue. If the Ukrainian nation was to remain nothing but an extension of its "big brother", the Russian nation, the Ukrainian state- and nation-building projects would on the one hand have had limited legitimacy, and the risk of full or partial reintegration with Russia would increase. On the other hand, the great danger was always that these Ukrainianizing efforts were to be perceived as too nationalist by the Russian minority. In such a case Ukrainization would not serve its intended purpose, but rather have an opposite effect and lead to growing separatist sentiments. This scenario materialized in March 2014 when the Crimean Peninsula through a referendum voted in favor of secession from Ukraine, and subsequently was annexed by the Russian Federation.

The perceptions of the pro-Russianism or pro-Ukrainianism of the two Presidents are difficult to operationalize, and therefore also hard to measure in absolute terms. One indicator, however, which might prove to be fruitful in analyzing the latter, is how the two

largest ethnic (or ethno-linguistic) groups in Ukraine have responded to their Presidents' nationality policies. In particular, this concerns the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking part of the population, as the Presidents in question were allegedly pro-Russian politicians. As we have seen, the expectations to the Presidents' approach to the language problem and foreign policy vary a great deal along geographical and ethno-linguistic lines. It is therefore reasonable to assume that no President is able to please everybody in a country as culturally divided as Ukraine in an attempt to build a strong and unified nation.

Shortly prior to Kuchma's inauguration in July 1994, as many as 56% of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and 70% of Russian-speaking Russians expressed a desire for an upgrade of the Russian language to a status as a second state language (See table 1). As we have seen, President Kuchma did not only fail to carry out such an upgrade, he also ignored a petition from the Parliamentary majority which would have granted the Russian language a status as regional language in most of Ukraine's oblasts. The continued Ukrainization within education policies also served as a source of frustration for many of Ukraine's Russophones.

Similar discrepancies can be found between the preferences of the eastern electorate within the realm of foreign policy, and the policies pursued by Kuchma. As Kuchma had never promoted a full reintegration of Ukraine with Russia (as desired by 38% of the Russophone Ukrainians and 56% of the Russian-speaking Russians), such an aspiration was hardly expected from him as President. The fact, however, that he denounced any form of political-military integration into post-Soviet structures, such as the CIS, and instead took a pro-Western approach promoting closer ties with the EU and NATO, was hardly what the Russian minority had expected from him.

So how, then, has the Russian minority responded to the nation-building policies pursued by Kuchma and Yanukovych, respectively? As far as language policies under Kuchma are concerned we can among others look to Janmaat, who over a period of 14 months from September 1996 to November 1997 carried out a survey among school pupils in four selected cities²⁷. I will in the following draw on some of the main findings from his research that I find the most relevant for this paper²⁸. It should be noted that as this research was conducted half way into Kuchma's first presidential period, they only reflect the *initial* response of the Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians (which Janmaat merged into one linguistic group; the Russophones/the Russian-speaking population) to his language policies.

²⁷ The cities were Lviv, Kiev, Odessa and Donetsk.

²⁸ For the full presentation of the survey results and Janmaat's analysis, see Janmaat 2000.

Furthermore, the survey was also restricted to the sphere of educational policy. Despite these limitations, we should nevertheless be able to draw some conclusions on the Russian-speaking population's response to Kuchma's language policies, which turned out to be more pro-Ukrainian than expected.

As we have seen, the number of schools and pre-schools using Ukrainian as their language of instruction grew under Kravchuk, and continued to grow under Kuchma. It should therefore be interesting to see whether this facilitation of Ukrainian-language schools and classes affected Russian-speaking parents in their choice of school/language of instruction for their children, or if they on the contrary proved reluctant to adapt to such Ukrainization policies. Janmaat surveyed the percentage of schoolchildren by parent nationality and language of instruction between two cohorts (1990-91 and 1994-95) in four different cities in 1996-97.

Table 4. Schoolchildren by Parent Nationality and Language of Instruction in 1996-1997 (in percentage):

Nationality of parents:	1990-91 cohort		1994-95 cohort	
	Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian
<i>Lviv:</i>				
Both Ukrainian	97.4	2.6	97.5	2.5
Ukrainian/Russian	64.1	35.9	80.3	19.7
Both Russian	35.4	64.6	15.0	85.0
<i>Kiev:</i>				
Both Ukrainian	74.9	25.1	94.9	5.1
Ukrainian/Russian	46.8	53.2	84.5	15.5
Both Russian	31.6	68.4	78.1	21.9
<i>Odessa:</i>				
Both Ukrainian	9.6	90.4	19.8	80.2
Ukrainian/Russian	8.6	91.4	13.7	86.3
Both Russian	4.3	95.7	11.5	88.5
<i>Donetsk:</i>				
Both Ukrainian	1.8	98.2	7.2	92.8
Ukrainian/Russian	1.5	98.5	3.5	96.5
Both Russian	1.0	99.0	1.7	98.3

Source: Janmaat 2000: p.140.

One of the interesting discoveries we can make from the above data is how the percentage of children having Ukrainian as their language of instruction increased within all categories, in some cases significantly, from the oldest to the youngest cohort. There is,

however, one noticeable exception. In Lviv, in the cases where both parents were ethnic Russians, there is in fact a significant decrease. Janmaat does not offer an explanation for this deviation, but concludes that Russian parents in Lviv had become more dismissive of Ukrainian-language education.

The overall tendency nevertheless remains clear: The ukrainianizing efforts initiated by Kravchuk, which were continued under Kuchma, had an impact on how parents selected language of instruction for their children. The regional differences, however, were quite noticeable. Whereas the percentage of schoolchildren with two Russian parents in Kiev rose dramatically from 31.6% to 78.1% between the two cohorts, the increase in Donetsk from 1.0% to 1.7% was marginal. This led Janmaat to conclude that there was a significant discrepancy in how Russians perceived the Ukrainianizing language policies of Kuchma depending on their region of residence. Whereas Russians in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine responded with *language retention*, Russians in central and western parts show a response of *language integration* (Janmaat 2000: pp.181-182). This tendency is evident also in the below table:

Table 5. Proportion of pupils instructed in Ukrainian and the share of Ukrainians in the local population (in percentage):

	All grades 1989-90	All grades 1991-92	All grades 1994-95	All grades 1997-98	First grade 1993-94	Ukr. in pop. 1989
Western Oblasts						
Chernivtsi	62.6	67.7	77.4	80.3	80.0	70.8
Ivano-Frankivsk	95.2	96.0	97.7	98.9	98.3	95.0
Lviv	90.0	91.8	95.4	97.3	97.3	90.4
Rivne	91.1	93.6	98.4	99.4	99.5	93.3
Ternopil	97.0	97.6	98.7	99.4	98.9	96.8
Zakarpattia	81.0	81.7	83.8	85.2	86.9	78.4
Volyn	94.0	94.6	97.3	98.8	97.8	94.6
Central Oblasts						
Cherkasy	74.5	75.8	83.7	90.1	91.5	90.5
Chernihiv	65.2	67.1	77.9	86.4	93.6	91.4
Khmelnitsky	77.7	81.5	89.6	95.1	97.3	90.4
Kiev City	21.7	30.9	63.5	82.2	90.7	72.5
Kiev Oblast	83.4	84.6	91.1	94.2	95.0	89.4
Kirovohrad	61.4	62.2	72.0	80.8	86.7	85.3
Poltava	73.2	74.3	80.5	87.3	89.7	87.9
Sumy	46.1	48.5	59.6	71.3	77.7	85.5
Vinnitsia	79.0	81.3	89.9	94.9	97.2	91.5
Zhytomyr	75.9	76.7	85.1	91.4	95.1	84.9
Eastern Oblasts						
Dnipropetrovsk	24.7	31.1	41.8	55.0	68.3	71.6
Donetsk	2.8	3.3	5.4	8.6	10.0	50.7
Kharkiv	25.3	28.0	35.1	43.1	44.6	62.8
Luhansk	7.7	6.7	8.7	11.3	14.8	51.9
Zaporizhzhia	21.4	22.7	29.7	35.7	42.6	63.1

Southern Oblasts						
Crimea	-	-	0.1	0.3	0.14	25.8
Kherson	50.9	51.7	59.8	68.0	78.7	75.7
Mykolaiv	41.5	43.5	53.3	61.8	74.4	75.6
Odesa	24.1	24.5	30.1	35.3	38.0	54.6
Ukraine:						
Ukraine total	47.5	49.3	56.5	62.8	66.0	72.7
Ukraine urban	-	-	43.8	52.3	-	65.8
Ukraine rural	-	-	83.7	84.8	-	86.5

Source: Janmaat 2000: pp.112-113.

As we can see, the percentage of pupils with Ukrainian as their language of instruction increased steadily over time in every oblast with almost no exceptions. In many cases the number even exceeded the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians in the local population. This development was much in line with the central authorities' stated aim of bringing the proportion of Ukrainian-instructed schoolchildren in accordance with the Ukrainian share/portion in the population (ibid.: p.111). One might argue that this flourishing of the Ukrainian language in the post-Glasnost era, which followed more than seven decades of various degrees of suppression of the Ukrainian language in the Soviet Union, was natural and inevitable. Be that as it may, it seems reasonable to assume that this transition would have taken longer if the Russian minority had fiercely resisted the state-driven policies of Ukrainization. Once again, however, we notice a discrepancy between the western/central and the eastern/southern oblasts where the majority of the Russian minority is living. This, in turn, underpins Janmaat's hypothesis about the Russians in the latter regions being more reluctant to ukrainization policies than in other parts of the country.

Dmitry Dzangirov points to Kuchma's education policies as one of the main reasons why his support base sensationally had shifted from the eastern to the western regions of Ukraine in the 1999 Presidential elections. According to him, not only did the Russian minority feel discriminated against as the opportunity to send their children to Russian-language schools deteriorated, Russian parents also quickly noticed how their children's literacy level in their native language decreased (Dzangirov 2014, author's interview). This "massive closing of Russian-language schools" followed by a decrease in children's literacy level, accordingly sparked a genuine fear that the ukrainianizing path Ukraine was on at this point in the long term could pose a threat to the widespread use of the Russian language in Ukraine (ibid.).

Laitin (1998) has also looked into the "Russian response" to nationality policies in Ukraine²⁹. In particular he has addressed the willingness of the Russian minority to learn the titular language and prepare their children for assimilation. His findings are much in line with those of Janmaat. He maintains: "Russians are not rapidly redefining themselves as Ukrainian and remain, at least compared to their beached compatriots in the Baltics, more hostile to the idea of their children becoming titulars" (ibid.: p.201). Oksana King, however, largely disagrees with this. According to her, "more and more Russians have begun to identify themselves with the Ukrainian nation, resulting in the adoption of the Ukrainian language (King 2008: p.49). In her reasoning, she points to how researchers have suggested that since 1991-94 Russian usage in everyday communication has dropped by almost 20 percentage points, from 56.1% to 37% (ibid.). Although Laitin remains skeptical to Russians' willingness to assimilate, he admits that "[...] ethnic Russian respondents appear to have a more positive attitude toward assimilation when they constitute a smaller percentage of the population of their city of residence" (Laitin 1998: p.206).

Laitin concludes that titular population percentage must be considered the by far most significant structural predictor of assimilation. One particularly interesting finding of Laitin's research is that in the cases where the titular population percentage becomes *too* large, the assimilation effect diminishes, or even reverses itself. If this is indeed so, this interesting piece of information could in fact shed new light on the startling finding that Janmaat was unable to explain: Why Russians in the western city of Lviv increasingly enrolled their children in Russian-language schools, whereas Russians in Odessa and Donetsk did the opposite. Other important factors affecting the openness to assimilation highlighted by Laitin is the degree of religiousness, level of education and the number of years a Russian has lived in Ukraine.

Based on the above, it is clear that we in the Ukrainian case only with difficulty can speak of *the* Russian response to Kuchma and Yanukovych's respective nationality policies. This corresponds with Brubaker's definition of a national minority applied in this thesis, i.e. "a family of related yet *mutually competing* stances, not a static ethnodemographic condition" (Brubaker 1996: p.60).

A few points should also be made regarding Yanukovych's language policies and how the Russian minority in Ukraine perceived them. As we have seen, Yanukovych during

²⁹ Laitin's study aimed at comparing the attitudes towards nationality policies in four of the post-Soviet republics: Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. I will restrict my focus to his findings in Ukraine.

his campaign promised to upgrade the status of the Russian language to second official only to later discard it. How did the Russian minority respond to this move? According to a survey conducted by "Rating" in March 2010, immediately after Yanukovych took office, as much as 54% of the respondents welcomed the proposed upgrade, whereas 40% opposed it (Ib.ua 2010). It would in my view, based on the relatively large support, be reasonable to assume that the Russophones reacted negatively to Yanukovych's U-turn. A change in attitude indeed became evident. When the same survey was conducted two years into Yanukovych's presidency, in June 2012, the support for an upgrade had drastically deteriorated. Whereas the share of the population that welcomed the Russian language as second official in Ukraine had decreased by 13 percentage points, from 54% to 41%, the share that opposed the idea had increased by 11 percentage points, from 40% to 51% (Moser 2013 : p.62).

How can this change in attitudes best be explained? Although Moser does not go into a detailed analysis of these numbers, he points to the fact that the second survey was conducted at the same time as the *Law On Principles of the State Language Policy* was being pushed through the Rada. He is thereby hinting that a large portion of Ukraine's Russophones considered their interests to be safeguarded through this law, and hence saw an upgrade to second state language as redundant. Germ Janmaat did in an e-mail to me not dismiss such an explanation, but he nevertheless found it more likely that the drop in support was an expression of discontent with the Yanukovych regime (Janmaat 2014, e-mail to author). It remains unclear to me, however, how a decline in support for an update of the Russian can be interpreted as a protest, and personally I find the adoption of the 2012 language law to be a much more likely explanation for the change of attitudes.

5.3 Reactions from the Russian Federation

A perception of independent Ukraine as a nationalizing state in the Brubaker terminology appears to have been evident in practically all layers of Russian society ever since the demise of the Soviet Union. This general view has on numerous occasions crossed over to allegations of anti-Russianism and Russophobia, and although this rhetoric has varied in intensity over time, it was nevertheless evident also during the presidencies of the allegedly pro-Russian Presidents Kuchma and Yanukovych.

In his description of the external national homeland to a national minority, Brubaker maintains that such a homeland is constructed through political action rather than the facts of ethnic demography (Brubaker 1996: p.67). The dynamic political stance, or family of such, which makes up the platform for this political action, would typically be characterized by the idea of a shared nationhood. This nationhood, in turn, reaches beyond the borders of the state and the boundaries of citizenship (ibid.). Given the fact that the Russian Federation traditionally has claimed some sort of "responsibility" for ethnic Russians residing in the Soviet successor states, its response to Kuchma and Yanukovych's respective policies on nationalities could serve as an indication as to how pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian they in fact were. I will in this section only briefly touch upon the response of the Russian Federation as the external national homeland to the Russian minority in Ukraine.

When Viktor Yanukovych took office in February 2010, Russia-Ukraine relations were at an all time low. A series of disputes between the two countries in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution had soured the political climate significantly. In particular, this concerned a several years long gas dispute over the price of natural gas supplied from Russia and the cost of transit to third countries, which broke out in March 2005. The continuing Ukrainian push for NATO membership was also a strongly contributing factor in the deterioration in Russia-Ukraine relations.

The fact that Russia in August 2008 engaged in military action over the Georgian regions of South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, allegedly under the pretext of defending the Russian citizens living there, had also raised grave concerns in Kiev. Much like Georgia's dispute over South-Ossetia, Kiev's tenuous relationship with Crimea was troubling given the latter's dense Russian population and strategic location on the Black Sea (Buffa 2010: p.616). The Russian Federation did in no way hide its discontent with the "Orange" regime at this point, and the Kremlin's frustration reached a climax in August 2009 when President Medvedev in an open letter to Viktor Yushchenko made it clear that:

"Однако то, что мы наблюдаем в годы Вашего президентства, нельзя воспринимать иначе, как отход украинской стороны от принципов дружбы и партнёрства с Россией, закреплённых в Договоре 1997 года. Я уже писал Вам об этом в ноябре прошлого года, но ситуация не только не выправляется, а, напротив, деградирует. [...] Продолжается вытеснение русского языка из общественной жизни, науки, образования, культуры, средств массовой информации, судопроизводства" (Medvedev 2009).

Medvedev's unusually sharp tone and special emphasis on what he saw as a clampdown on the Russian language in Ukraine, leaves no doubt: The Russian Federation at

this point clearly saw Ukraine as a nationalizing state in the Brubaker terminology. As we have seen, if the national homeland of a given minority *perceives* the host state to this minority as a nationalizing state, this would be a sufficient criteria for asserting that it is *really* so. It was therefore the great hope of the Kremlin that the supposedly pro-Russian Yanukovych would bring about a real change in Ukraine's policies towards Russia and the Russian minority in Ukraine. Medvedev's grave concern regarding the position of the Russian language in Ukraine is definitely worth noting. As we have already seen, as little as 3% of the respondents in the southern and 6% in the eastern regions of the country listed "Russian language status" as one out of three issues most important *to you personally* in a public opinion survey conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" in May 2013. In another survey conducted in 2006 as much as 77.3% of the surveyed Russian-speakers considered their cultural and informational needs ensured, either fully (23.2%), rather (33.6%) or somewhat (20.5%), whereas 11.9% considered them rather not ensured and 7.6% not ensured at all (Kulyk 2013: p.290).

The sharp and highly critical tone in which Medvedev some months earlier had expressed his deep concern over the direction in which Russia-Ukrainian relations were heading, was already at the onset of Yanukovych's term in office replaced with optimism. On the 15th of February 2010 Medvedev officially congratulated Yanukovych on his election victory:

"Рассчитываю, что российско-украинское взаимодействие вновь обретёт конструктивный и плодотворный, поистине партнёрский характер. Уверен, совместными усилиями мы сможем придать новый импульс развитию обоюдовыгодных двусторонних связей" (Medvedev 2010).

The Kremlin, in other words, warmly welcomed Yanukovych as President of Ukraine. This was hardly surprising as he succeeded the overtly pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko and his "Orange" regime. As I touched upon in the previous chapter, however, Yanukovych did arguably not turn out to be as pro-Russian as the Kremlin had hoped.

5.4 Summary

When Leonid Kuchma took office during the summer of 1994, the pro-Russian sentiments in Ukrainian society were quite strong. Not only did a large portion of the population wish to see the Russian language being granted a status of a state language in Ukraine, as many as one out of three Ukrainians even called for a full reintegration with

Russia. It therefore seems that the Ukrainianizing measures taken by Kuchma to a large degree contradicted the expectations that were directed against him. Although Kuchma certainly paid a price for this during the 1999 elections, when the eastern and southern electorate turned its back on him, it nevertheless seems that the long term effect of his policies was that Ukraine's Russophones to a larger degree started identifying themselves with the Ukrainian nation. Not only were children with Russian parents increasingly enrolled into Ukrainian language schools, the calls for reintegration with Russia became fewer and weaker.

By the time Yanukovych took office in 2010, reuniting with Russia in one state was not really an issue. The fact that 56% of the population called for Russian to be granted state-language status, however, underlined that Ukraine's Russophones still was not satisfied with the language situation in the country. Expressions of concern from the Russian Federation concerning the language issue in Ukraine also contributed to the set of expectations he was met with.

6 Conclusions

Initially in this thesis I formulated three research questions. The first of these asked whether or not Russophone politicians, who come to Kiev from eastern and southern parts of Ukraine in order to engage in politics on a national level, are subject to a Ukrainianizing influence. It also raised the question of how such Ukrainization can be detected and measured. The second question presupposes that some kind of Ukrainization *is* taking place, and asked what are the underlying driving forces for, and subsequent effects of this. The third question, which presupposes that Ukrainization *is not* evident, asked how the differences, as well as similarities, concerning the nationality issue and relations with Russia, can be explained between the various Presidents.

Before I draw my final conclusions I would for a minute like to return to my starting point; Kolstø's hypothesis of Ukrainization. One of the main arguments in support of his hypothesis, as presented in *Political Construction Sites* (Kolstø 2000), was the fact that the Russophone and allegedly pro-Russian Leonid Kuchma abandoned his campaign promise to grant the Russian language a status as an official language in Ukraine. By then he had converted from being a Russian-speaker to using the Ukrainian language in most of his public appearances. As we have seen, Viktor Yanukovych followed this trail step by step years later. At first glance it therefore seems that the Kolstø hypothesis of Ukrainization also has applicability to the case of Yanukovych.

As far as the conversion from Russian to Ukrainian as the main language of public communication is concerned, this thesis has shown that there was a set of perfectly logical reasons for this behavior. The *Ukrainian Law on Presidential Elections* clearly specifies that any candidate must master the state language in order to be eligible. It is also a fact that it has become customary to use the state language in the political discourse in Kiev, both in Parliament and elsewhere. In reality this left Kuchma and Yanukovych with no choice but to improve their Ukrainian, and in this sense the Ukrainization can be seen as "forced" upon them. This thesis has shown that the switch was largely a necessity considering the composition of the Ukrainian population and the various sets of expectations the President is met with. In a country as divided as Ukraine in terms of language, ethnicity, culture, religion and historical memory, it would make little sense if the President did not at the very least make an effort to be the President of *all* of Ukraine. The great dilemma, however, is that

striving for approval from the western regions of Ukraine easily could alienate Russophone politicians from their own constituencies. This became particularly evident during the 1999 presidential elections, when Kuchma's support base sensationally changed from the eastern to the western regions.

The conversion from Russian to a more extended use of the Ukrainian language can undoubtedly be labeled Ukrainization, and as such the Kolstø hypothesis would already at this point be confirmed. Changing the language of communication, however, does not necessarily or automatically change the political agenda. The fact that they both discarded their outspoken promises of making the Russian language a state language in Ukraine is therefore of greater interest. The empirical findings presented in this thesis indicate that pragmatism caused Kuchma and Yanukovych to put the Russian language status upgrade on ice. Firstly, following through on this promise would arguably bring them only marginal political gains. Furthermore, doing so would effectively deprive them of the possibility of benefitting from the sentiments in society that call for such a move. As argued, the *promise* of a Russian language status upgrade is in fact more powerful than the upgrade itself. Based on this, the decision to leave the Russian language status untouched appears to have been a pragmatic concession by the "power elite" to the "ethnic romantics", much in line with the Kolstø argumentation.

I have also investigated the language issue in light of Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus model. It is certainly worth noting that whereas an upgrade of the Russian language to second state language has become less important to the Russian minority in Ukraine over time, it has become increasingly important to the Russian Federation as a means of "protecting the rights of Russians in Ukraine". This brings us back to the very essence of Kolstø's hypothesis: Maintaining cultural distance to the Russian Federation has been of vital importance to the legitimacy of the Ukrainian nation-building project given the close historic and cultural bonds between the two countries. It appears that the attempts to consolidate a Ukrainian nation and state independent from Russia have sparked some sort of reaction from the national homeland of Ukraine's largest minority.

Kolstø rightly pointed to Moscow as an "Other" in his argumentation. This "Other" is central to how Kiev defines itself. However, in my view he does not sufficiently emphasize how attempts from the Kremlin to "Russify" Ukraine could speed up the process of nationalization in Kiev. In other words, where Moscow is trying to narrow the gap between the Russian and the Ukrainian nations, Kiev is striving to widen it. As Russia has grown

considerably stronger under President Vladimir Putin, the pressure Moscow has exerted on Ukraine has increased. Faced with this growing external pressure, Ukrainian leaders have felt a need to act in order to counteract the impact of this external force. After all, all of Ukraine's Presidents, even the allegedly pro-Russian ones, have sworn the same oath to defend the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. In Kolstø's defense it should be noted that he formulated his hypothesis before Putin came to power, and he was in no position to foresee Russia's reemergence as a global power under his rule. The "Moscow factor", I suspect, is a much more powerful driving force behind the hypothesis of a Ukrainization of Russophone politicians than Kolstø realized.

Traces of this "Moscow factor" have also become evident within the realm of foreign policy. Yanukovych reaffirmed his intentions of integrating Ukraine into Europe once he became President. The signing of the *Russian Ukrainian Naval Base for Gas Treaty*, however, and also the hasty and non-transparent way it was pushed through the Rada, led his critics to argue that he was just as pro-Russian as they had claimed. It was only after Russia failed to fulfill its obligations under this agreement that Yanukovych started keeping Russia at an arm's length. At the same time, and much to Moscow's annoyance, Yanukovych intensified talks with the European Union on an Association and Free Trade Agreement. Once again we see how it was Moscow, to a greater extent than Kiev, that provoked a Ukrainization of the pro-Russian politician.

Although both Kuchma and Yanukovych continuously emphasized their commitment to work for the national interests of a sovereign Ukraine, independent from Russia, it is today widely perceived that Kuchma was more successful in his handling of foreign relations. Here I wish to underline a few case-specific differences that have become evident in this thesis. Firstly, Kuchma, being a Soviet school *gosudarstvennik*, proved much more skillful in his juggling of multiple vectors than Yanukovych. Secondly, Yanukovych was faced with a significantly more powerful Russia with more clearly defined foreign policy priorities than what was the case with Kuchma. Thirdly, whereas Kuchma had relatively large room for maneuver in his foreign policies at an early stage in the history of independent Ukraine, Yanukovych found himself in the unfortunate situation where he was forced to "choose" between the East and the West.

The biggest discrepancy between Kuchma and Yanukovych's respective approaches to the nationality question, that has become apparent in this thesis, is how they handled the issue of education policy. Whereas Kuchma's choice of Michael Zgurovsky for the post of

Minister of Education and Science seemingly confirms Kolstø's theory of a Ukrainianized President, Yanukovych's appointee for the same post, Dmytro Tabachnyk, was so controversial that it in my view significantly weakens the hypothesis. If Yanukovych had undergone Ukrainization, the fact that he delegated some of the most delicate portfolios as far as the nationality issue is concerned to a person who promoted clearly anti-Ukrainian views, is difficult to explain.

The clearly pro-Russian policies pursued by Yanukovych within the sphere of education stand in contrast to his foreign policies, in which he, throughout most of his reign, kept Russia at an arm's length. This brings us to the question I initially asked concerning how Ukrainization of cultural and foreign policy are linked together. Kuchma's attempt to integrate Ukraine into Western structures was mirrored in his education policies, in which he facilitated the spread of Ukrainian language schools. This illustrates how the Ukrainization of cultural and foreign policy under Kuchma followed *parallel* paths. In the case of Yanukovych, however, his ambition of European integration was accompanied by various attempts to further spread the use of Russian in Ukraine. This was not only the case within his education policies. The adoption of the *Law On the Principles of the State Language Policy* also bears witness to a President who pursued a clearly pro-Russian agenda domestically. In the case of Yanukovych it therefore seems that cultural and foreign policy followed *separate* paths.

6.1 Final thoughts on Kolstø's hypothesis

In conclusion I would say that Kolstø's hypothesis, based on the empirical findings in this thesis, is plausible. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that an overweight of evidence has been unveiled *in support of* the hypothesis. It has nevertheless become clear that it does not apply to Yanukovych to the same extent as to Kuchma. As recent events clearly have shown, the nationality issue in Ukraine continues to serve as a source of conflict throughout shifting political leaderships. Kolstø's hypothesis can be a very helpful tool in analyzing the role of politicians who arrive in Kiev from the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. It is however my opinion that this needs to be researched further. I would in this regard make the following two recommendations for future studies of Kolstø's hypothesis:

- As this thesis has shown, the President of Ukraine is subject to a set of both written and unwritten laws as far as language and general behaviour is concerned. It is in any

given president's own personal interest to comply with these, and as such they serve as a driving force behind the Ukrainization that is exclusive to the presidency. It would in my opinion therefore be interesting to test Kolstø's hypothesis on cases that are subject to a different set of expectations. This could for instance be Russophone Members of Parliament.

- A number of important case-specific differences between Kuchma and Yanukovych became evident during the course of writing this thesis. Based on this, I would recommend that future research is based on an expanded number of cases. Although such an approach would arguably give a less detailed overview over each case, it would also decrease the risk for case-specific factors coming in the way of the hypothesis' applicability.

7 Literature

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8 Interviews

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